





Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025



BENEFITS FORGOT

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

Post 8vo, cloth extra, price 3s. 6d.

THE AVERAGE WOMAN.

WORLD.—“ *Characteristic, fresh, and simply pathetic.*”

ST. JAMES'S GAZETTE.—“ *Decidedly good stories, and well told.*”

SCOTSMAN.—“ *The book will interest everyone who takes it up.*”

MORNING POST. — “ *Considerable freshness of inspiration . . . touches both of humour and pathos.*”

LONDON : WILLIAM HEINEMANN

BENEFITS FORGOT

A NOVEL

BY

WOLCOTT BALESTIER

AUTHOR OF
"THE AVERAGE WOMAN"
AND JOINT-AUTHOR WITH RUDYARD KIPLING, OF "THE NAULAHKA"

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. II



LONDON

WILLIAM HEINEMANN

1893

[All rights reserved]

RICHARD CLAY AND SONS, LIMITED
LONDON AND BUNGAY.

BENEFITS FORGOT

CHAPTER I

DEED was pitching his effects into his trunk with nervous haste. If he paused for a moment to gaze at the confused heap, the ache at his heart reasserted itself, and he turned from his work, and went to stare miserably out of the hotel window. In these moments he tasted despair.

He had paid Philip. That was done with. He had made short work of his protestations ; he knew on which side to place him now. He had gone Jasper's way. Deed told himself that he ought to be glad. He might have gone on trusting him as he had trusted Jasper, until he had confided enough to his honour to make the trust worth abusing ; and a sickening breach of faith, like Jasper's, must

have followed in due course. It was better to know the worst now. As he remembered what the worst was, he turned from the window dizzily, and sank into a chair, groaning aloud.

He no longer had a son. The misery of the words filled up the world's space. But a more hateful pain lay within the loss : that they had lost themselves to him. He could have borne that they should die—even if their deaths had trodden on each other's heels, as their falsities had done. But that they should live as ingrates and traitors to his love was a pain beyond the worst that death can bring.

What was it, he asked himself, as he sat crouched miserably in his chair, with his head in his hands, that made ingratitude so intolerable, so damnable, so unforgivable a thing? Was it that it cut into the best of a man? Was it because the loving acts on which gratitude follows proceed from the richest, the tenderest, the secretest corners of a man's nature that the agony of an answering baseness, where one has a right to look for the answering love, is so unendurable? Of course it was a pain to receive a blow in the face, and doubly a pain where one must rather expect a kiss; but did that explain all the degrading, the soul-

nauseating horror of ingratitude? The pang of it was part of the stock of familiar allusion; it must have been felt since men first loved and served one another; shredded echoes of quotation floated into his head and out again, as he sat writhing under the torture of it.

“For when the noble Cæsar saw *him* stab,
Ingratitude, more strong than traitors’ arms,
Quite vanquished him: then burst his mighty heart . . .”

And Lear’s cry—he had never felt its awful force before—

“ . . . that she may feel,
How sharper than a serpent’s tooth it is,
To have a thankless child ! ”

Common! Why it was in the School Speakers! Every one had felt the wound! And yet none of all the millions who had suffered from it could say what it was—what peculiar, stinging, maddening touch lay in it to make the hurt of it beyond all other hurts. Ah, well! What difference could it make to them or him? They knew the pain, and he knew it. The pain was enough.

He got up and went restlessly about his packing again. Where were the good hours of seven days ago? he asked

himself, as he folded his dress-coat. He smiled sadly for the thought, and for the idea of taking a dress-coat on such a journey. It was useless to take it; but it was equally foolish to leave it: he did not expect to return immediately, and he did not wish to give it to the hotel people. He thought he should go on a long journey, to Florida, to Cannes, to Egypt—anywhere away from memory—when he had found the men at Burro Peak City who had once wanted to buy the “Lady Bountiful” and had made his sale. The hotel people might prove ungrateful, he said to himself, with a sorry laugh. “Ungrateful!” he repeated, in the aimless need we feel to keep up a conversation with ourselves when we are miserable. The word flooded his heart with the recurrent ache; and he dropped the coat listlessly into the tray, and returned to the window. Ah, where was the man of those good hours of a week ago? He remembered vaguely that he had once been happy, as souls in hell may recall their days of earth: it was an unreal memory, as if it had been another’s happiness. Who was the man who had ridden up to a certain door in Maverick a week before with life at his feet, and all the sweet airs of earth blowing for him? Not he.

That man had two sons who loved him, and whom he loved.

Deed looked sadly on the spectacle of the street, crowded with men to whom life still meant something—men who had not lost their sons, perhaps, or had never known what it was to have sons, and to love them as one's soul. Why did they go up and down? It fatigued his sight, this restless motion of which he had once been part—before his quarrel with Margaret, before Jasper had turned traitor, before Philip had cut the last tie that bound him to life, and set him adrift among the unfriended men to whom nothing matters. What was it all about? What was it for?

He remembered that they lived in a different world—his world of a week ago—and that they understood what it was all for, no doubt, as he would have understood, then. They understood; but his present feeling would be as incomprehensible to them as theirs was to him. Would he have understood it himself a week ago? All happiness and unhappiness suddenly seemed to him to be shut up to themselves in chambers desolately aloof from each other, and from every other state of feeling. One sensation must for ever be as solitary, as incommunicable as the other. The

unbearable sense of loneliness which the thought gave him made him shut his eyes against the sight of the going and coming in the street. The best sympathy, he knew, would be powerless to guess deeper than the outer envelope of his feeling ; and these men, if they would imagine his misery ever so vaguely, must not merely be unhappy themselves, but must be like enough him to understand him ; and he did not understand himself.

Could any of all the strange chances that brought men to a mining camp from the earth's dust-bins and coal-holes, leaving every colour of human experience behind them, have drawn here one man like enough himself to understand how, a week ago, in the crazy satisfaction of an impulse of passion, he could have forsaken a happiness filling and overflowing in the moment of his folly all his hopes? Was there one who could do an incurable wrong in such besotted confidence in one hour, and know it for what it was in the next? With others did the remorse follow instant upon the fatuity? With so much wisdom after the event, did others find none before?

But he knew very well that no one in his place could have done Margaret the unforgivable wrong he had done her.

It was left for him to make a loving woman, guilty only in endeavouring to save him from himself, the victim of an infernal suspicion ; and upon the head of it to abandon her on their wedding day. It was an insensate cruelty ; and now it was his punishment to long hopelessly for a forgiveness which he should never insult her to ask. A moment later, thinking how Margaret would judge the expedient he had been driven to that morning in order to raise money to pay Philip, a sharp doubt of its innocence insinuated itself, and he would have been glad to undo it. But that was past praying for ; and, on the whole, it was as safe and fair as it seemed, probably. The \$25,000 which he had borrowed at his bank in the morning on the security of some Iron Silver stock—part of the Brackett estate of which he was one of two trustees—was a temporary accommodation from an estate which owed thrice that sum to his care, and one which could cost it nothing. If he could have sold his Burro Peak mine, the “Lady Bountiful,” in Leadville, he need not have called on it ; but they did n’t know the “Lady Bountiful” in Leadville, and the men at Burro Peak who did, and who had offered him \$60,000 for it a year ago (when he had refused it) were a four days’ journey from

Leadville, beyond the telegraph and the railway, beyond even the stage coach. As it was he had simply borrowed \$25,000 until he could lay his hands on his own money—a matter of ten days, as he reckoned it. He could n't wait ten days to pay Philip. He had found it irksome enough to wait for the opening of banking hours on the morrow of their quarrel; he had itched to have the money in his fingers when he had given him his bitter promise, and he had risen the next morning with his pride engaged to its last crazy and obstinate fibre in the resolve to keep the letter of that promise. He had kept it.

He turned to his packing once more, with a curse for Jasper on his lips. In the little space of a week he had lost all that made life worth while, and of all this devilish fatality of loss Jasper was the origin. The ruinous righting of himself which, in its endless ramifications, had now pursued him to the last covert of his happiness—whom else had he to thank for it but Jasper? Through him he had been brought to the madness which separated him from Margaret; through him he had just parted with Philip as a stranger; through him, worst of all, he had laid himself open to the unbearable reproach, from which he had just freed himself

with Philip at a cost of which he preferred not to think. He saw all that had happened since the moment he had opened Jasper's letter as one piece of wretchedness, wrong-doing and shame, and of every inch of it he saw Jasper as the author. He longed, in the fury that seized him at the thought, to lay his hand on his throat, and crush out the life he had given him.

But his helpless rage against Jasper and Philip ended always in a remorseful thought. In the bitterest pain he suffered through their falsity it was a negative mitigation of his grief to know that he had not himself to blame. But as to Margaret it was his shame and torment to know that his own act had lost her to him. In this blackest hour of his life he knew that, but for himself, she might have been by. The single happiness which might have remained to help him to turn his eyes patiently towards the future had been done to death by his own folly. He cursed himself.

She would never look at him again. He knew that. He should be ashamed if she did. He would not have ventured to lift his eyes to her face if they had met in the street; yet he longed for her presence at this moment as never before.

He would have gone half round the world for a touch of her hand ; and he had cast away the right to take it as any stranger might.

“Fool ! fool !” he roared to the unanswering air, as he paced the room. He flung his arms aloft in the last abasement of his misery.

His arms relaxed. He sank into the chair. Tears smarted in his eyes.

Margaret, when she stole into the room five minutes later, found him so.

CHAPTER II.

“YES,” said Beatrice to her husband, a week after this—she repeated it because, after all, perhaps she was not quite sure of it—“it was the very best thing she could have done !”

This thought about Margaret’s impulsive flight to Deed and her marriage had been reached by a circuitous route ; but she clung to it now. When Margaret had come down stairs with her bag packed, after her ride with Ernfield, and had asked to have her trunk sent after her to the station, Beatrice had not discredited herself by a question. She divined, in the moment of pause which she suffered to elapse before she spoke, just what had happened, and all the feeling that was making a tumult in Margaret’s breast at the moment, and casting her into Deed’s arms ; and after an awful moment of reflection, in which she reconciled herself to the

odious surrender which Margaret was making, and taught herself to like it, and then to delight in it—particularly to delight in it as the act of Margaret—she fell upon her neck. She said it was the best, the wisest, the most womanly, uncharacteristic, human, every-day thing that Margaret had ever done, and that she deserved a triple kiss of farewell and approval.

She had her qualms when she had gone. Her jealousy for the integrity of the unassailable, the righteous position which Margaret had maintained since the event which would have crushed another woman returned upon her with a rush; and it suddenly seemed wholly wrong—what she had done.

It had all been a burning matter with Beatrice since it had happened. She had felt more than she could ever say about it. If she had said everything she thought she would have said that a man who could do what Deed had done deserved forgiveness at no woman's hands. Of course any woman would forgive him, if she loved him; but that was another matter. If he was to be forgiven, however, surely he should come suing for pardon on his knees. In this light it became something perilously like a point of honour,

involving the whole sex, that Margaret should not be the first to seek a reconciliation.

Beatrice simply could not bear to think that, without any merit or motion on his part, he should win back a happiness which he had not deserved. But she saw that, after all, this did not count. If women went into the question of men's deserts, where would they bring up? It was the wrong way of approaching the question altogether. The right way was one which she explained to her husband, who smiled at her over his litted coffee cup—they were at breakfast—when she made known to him the conclusion at which she had finally arrived about Margaret.

"How is it the best thing she could have done?" he demanded. "She did n't do it on your advice, Trix," he said with a twinkling eye.

"I don't care," returned Beatrice valiantly. "She did right, if there was any right left to do in such a case. It was the womanly thing to have done."

"Yes," owned Vertner, "it was the weak thing."

"To be sure," assented Beatrice, accepting this version of her meaning courageously, "and that's its strong point." Vertner laughed. "No, but I mean it," persisted his wife.

"In the dreadful situations women are always getting into, since they took to masterfulness and self-sufficiency, there's just one way out that's sure to be right; and that's the weak way."

"When in doubt throw away all your trumps."

"When in doubt be a woman. Of course she abandoned her position. She threw away all her advantage. But her advantage was really too great—don't you see? She had to get rid of it. It was a bother. I suppose there is such a thing as being more in the right than you know what to do with. It did n't make her happy, and it must always have kept him from making the advance. I see that now. I used to want him to grovel. But I don't see that it would have done her any real good. It would have been a poor victory at best; and what she has done, if she has done it in the way I suppose she has, would be a triumph."

"Oh, you need n't trouble yourself to mention that when a woman does do the magnanimous, a man is wincing for it somewhere. I believe you."

"Hush, Ned! You know she acted from the purest motives."

"Nonsense, my dear! You would n't go and accuse any

woman of pure motives, I hope—pure and simple motives. Let us admit that she acted from the purest adulterated motives possible. It's a handsome admission."

Beatrice was silent. She was thinking of something else. "I don't know," she said, after a moment doubtfully, "whether I quite like the mere act of her return to Mr. Deed. But that was inevitable; and I've always thought it's a mistake that we ought to leave to men to be deterred by the look of an act. Don't you know, Ned? Nothing seems very right, let alone very heroic, when you are doing it. Taking the train, getting to the hotel, finding the number of his room—I'm afraid she found it all hard because it must all have seemed so small. She was doing a fine thing; and there ought to have been some very good music by a concealed orchestra, scenery by the best artists, and electric lights. Don't you think so? But when they were in each other's arms and forgiving each other everything, and agreeing to forget that they had ever tried to forget each other, or do without each other, are n't you sure that she saw that it was the right thing to have done even if it was the weak thing and the absurd thing, and the—"

"Crawfish thing?" suggested Vertner. "I don't know. You would n't be up to any such game, Trix."

"I should n't have got into the situation originally. But if I had——"

"You would have done me up with a weakness to which Mrs. Deed's was hearty."

"Well, it would have been a different kind. I should have tried to select something that you would understand."

"Thanks. And do you suppose Deed understands?"

"I'm sure he does. No woman would do such a thing for a man who she was not sure would understand. He would understand and would be humbled into the dust by it."

"And you picture her spending the years to come consoling him for the humiliation her brilliant weakness has caused—dusting him off?"

"I picture them both as very happy," returned Beatrice with dignity. Her husband laughed.

When Vertner came home to their one o'clock dinner, she perceived by the look on his face that he had heard something which he did not mean to tell her.

“What makes you like this business, Trix?” he asked her abruptly, as if they had not discussed the question.

“Don’t you?” she asked, with quick suspicion. Like a good wife, she kept a rational scorn for her husband’s ideas about certain things—the sort of things which only women understood; but she had a respect for his perceptions about character—as Vertner said, he lived “by sizing people up,” and could n’t afford to make mistakes—and, at the moment, she had a still greater respect for his news.

“I like my bread and butter better,” said Vertner non-committally, biting delicately at a mushroom.

It was one of the peculiarities of the Vertner household that their table, in the face of every sort of obstacle, maintained an almost Eastern decency and good cheer. As Vertner told Beatrice, they “would have fresh artichokes if they had to buy up all the canned goods in Maverick to find ’em.” In a country where every one lived by grace of the tin can, the Vertners did not manage their good table without the use of an energy, ardour and inventive skill which would have gone a long way in felling the forests of a hardier sort of pioneering. Vertner did not leave it all to his wife; he

had studied household providing since his marriage, as he studied a number of other unrelated and unexpected things. In most of the other things he, more or less remotely, "saw a dollar;" but in this he satisfied an instinct for propriety, for excellence, for "having things right," as he called it, which did not follow him always into other departments.

"Oh, Ned, do let us have *something* free from your wretched mighty dollar." There was the weariness in her tone which implies an old and hopeless subject between man and wife. "What can there be in Margaret's marriage to affect the price of corner lots?"

She would not have been the loyal wife to him she was if, in accepting him, she had not accepted, without premeditation, the larger half of his theories. But even when she talked unconsciously in the too alluring, too natural slang, which was so native to the life he led, and either so shockingly or so admirably expressive of it (she was not always sure which), she was sorrowfully conscious of her reserves. She might easily have nagged him with them, but not merely her good sense, but a feeling of obligation to his honesty in having told her as much of his way of life as a man can convey to the woman who has not yet married

him, withheld her. She could not say that she had not been warned. Yet, in her young girl's ideals there had never been any arrangement made for trimming her life by the market for her husband's new scheme. There was always a new scheme in the Vertner household, and they had it for breakfast, dinner, and supper.

"Corner-lots are all right," said Vertner. "The trouble is deeper down. Deed has left me with a flooded mine on my hands. If he had stayed where he was, I could have talked him into that pumping machinery."

"Then I'm glad he did n't. You have enough mines, Ned," said she. It was the kind of inapposite wisdom which does not torment a man less for being based upon a feeling to which he partly assents, and not at all on the facts which he knows contradict it.

"Have I? I sha'n't have enough mines, my dear, until one of them is a money-maker. I've got too many holes in the ground; but I'm mighty short of mines. This one I'm working with Deed—or should be if I was—has a vein in sight that—" He went on to tell her the seductive story of the assay, and of the wealth at their feet to which she had listened in the case of a dozen other mines. She knew how

each of these other mines had turned out, and he knew ; but there is a tameless sublimity of faith known to the man who has once owned a mine and to the man's family, which acknowledges no past and is as gaily independent of experience as the clouds that forage the air for the other clouds in which they lose themselves.

"But where has Mr. Deed gone?" asked Beatrice at the end of his recital, as enthusiastic now as her husband.

"How should I know? A man does n't give away the itinerary of his wedding journey from the steps of the County Court House. Besides in this case there was n't time. I don't see but they were married by a dynamo. Philip and I were both in the hotel office. He had just had his final row with his father. They had given each other that full material for the understanding of each other's character so valuable in family rows the night before ; and this was rather quiet—not actually, but by comparison. Deed paid Philip some money that he did n't want, that he hated and abhorred, and which he straightway took to the First National and deposited to his father's credit. Those being the facts, Deed naturally supposed Philip was hankering for it, that he was basely longing for it at any cost

to him, and that he was suspecting him of having tried to do him out of it : a thoroughly good misunderstanding like that (without a fact in sight) is just the basis for a gorgeous family row. You know Deed's temper. It's like Barnum's rarities, the hottest, the most ungovernable, the most totally unreasonable temper ever seen in captivity. It's to his credit that he does keep it in captivity most of the time, so that you might think his disposition a good sort. But when it blazes——look out ! That's all. It was on the blaze this time ; and when you remember that Philip himself has n't the most—well, not the most angelic. . . . you can believe it was a rumpus. Philip refused the money, of course, and obliged his father to insult him to get him to take it. Then they parted for ever ; and an hour afterward, when Philip was just starting up stairs for the reconciliation that follows such fool rows, he stood aside to let his father pass, with a lady on his arm. Deed did n't look at him. The porters put some luggage on a carriage in waiting, the hotel clerk threw an old shoe after them, and I went back and inquired at the desk, and found out that Philip had a new mother. They had been out to St. George's between the time when Philip came out of the

hotel hot against his father and came to hunt me, and the time when Phil, like the sensible fellow he is, went back to make it all up."

"Well, I'm glad they were married in church, anyway," said Beatrice, "and the haste would n't make any difference to Margaret. She would n't care any more what she was married in than—than a cassowary."

"Yes," said Vertner, wickedly, "that indifference of the cassowary to an appropriate wedding dress, and that vile carelessness about orange blossoms is just one of those facts of natural history that lend a charm to—"

But his wife had finished her dinner, and she came over and shook him.

He grew serious when she asked him for his news. "It's not my news, 'Trix," he said. "You must n't ask me." He fell into one of the moods of sober thoughtfulness in which his new schemes were usually imagined, and in which Beatrice was always careful not to disturb him. It was not a scheme to-day, she saw, however. His face was almost sad ; and his musing was apparently often balked by some thought, at recollection of which he would make a wry face, and clench his fist.

Vertner's trouble was the practical disappearance of Deed—or, rather, certain circumstances accompanying his disappearance known only to Philip and himself. In the midst of his wretchedness about this miserable business (it tormented him more than anything that had ever happened to himself—not only because if he had raised the money in time it would n't have happened, but because he really liked Deed, to whom he owed his present position in Colorado) only one thing consoled him: that they had not yet got hold of it in the town, and so could not be discussing it. What Vertner feared was that it would get into the papers. It had not represented itself as a disappearance to the town, thus far. It merely seemed to the gossip of Maverick that Deed was taking an unusually long wedding journey.

There were, besides, other things still to talk of connected with Deed, and especially other things connected with Margaret and her marriage, from which it is doubtful if the town chatter would really have liked to be called while so much remained unsaid. Margaret's action, as being the most sensational occurrence in what began to be known as "this Deed business" — over-topping even Deed's desertion of her on their wedding day—needed most of the

discussion, and it had held the attention of the ladies steadily since her sudden departure for Leadville, and the announcement of the marriage in the Leadville papers of the following day. In that matter they felt that they had been trifled with. If Miss Derwenter had the high strain of forgiveness somewhere about her enabling her to pardon a man who had publicly deserted her on her wedding day, why in the name of nameless things, had n't she found it out earlier? Was it for this that she had flaunted her preference for Doctor Ernfield in the face of the town? And what, pray, did she mean by her actions with that gentleman? If she had really cared for Deed all along, her encouragement of Ernfield was simply shameless. The probability was that she had set herself to captivate Ernfield in the hope of breaking her fall; and that, when she found Ernfield obdurate, she had turned to her first lover.

At all events, when the ladies had been put to the trouble of arriving,—after a fortnight's fluttering among other opinions—at the belief that the affair between her and Deed was to be regarded as definitively “off,” the necessity of revising this belief was irksome. The sense of the hardship of the situation of public opinion was liberally voiced

wherever women met ; and occasionally where men met. The ladies usually began with the admission that, so far as Margaret's "carrying-on" with Dr. Ernfield went—it was by this phrase that they alluded to the relation which Margaret had imagined so innocent ; it was merciful that she was not in Maverick at this time to hear what was said of it—she could not be blamed. What the ladies objected to was her playing fast and loose, and off and on, as they said. "She did n't really seem to know *which* she wanted, so far as I can see," said Mrs. McDermott, whose husband dealt in hats on Mesa Street.

"She got to know at the last," suggested one of the ladies grimly, as Dr. Ernfield, on horseback, passed the church in which the ladies were gathered.

"Yes," laughed Mrs. McDermott. "All of a sudden, as you might say. No doubt Dr. Ernfield gave her cause."

"Well," exclaimed Mrs. B. Frank Butler, "I'm sure you can't say the poor thing was to blame for turning most any way for refuge just at first, when Mr. Deed deserted her on her wedding day—going off as casual as you please. And I'm not so sure, either, that I blame her for turning the

other way for refuge, just at the last. There was n't really anything left for her but that, if she wanted to marry at all ; and as to her flirting with Dr. Ernfield,—if you call it that, I don't know what I *would* call it m'self—who can say anything against a woman that ain't past marriageable age, for allowing the attentions of a pleasant and agreeable young man that any one can see is dead in love with her ? ”

She lifted her coarsely pretty little head out of the collar of her sealskin sacque at this, bridling ; and it was evident that Mrs. Butler would not have been guilty of a wasteful discretion in such a case.

CHAPTER III

"SEE here," said Vertner to Philip, when he met him in Mesa Street in the afternoon, after his talk with Beatrice, (Philip had come down with him from Leadville on the day that the evidence of Deed's marriage had been offered them), "I've been thinking this thing out."

"You have n't thought it out in any shape that's going to wipe out my assininity, Vertner," returned Philip. "I'm at the bottom of this thing, I tell you. You can't get me out from under it. I maddened my father, and if I had had a grain of sense—or had had the sense to use the sixteenth part of a grain that I sometimes have when there's nothing to use it on—I should have seen that I must madden him. Taking Jasper's part at that! Well, the thing *was n't* square. I suppose I had to protest. But think of it's being Jasper! As if I did n't owe him enough!"

"*Now* you're shouting!" assented Vertner cordially. "With a fellow like Jasper in sight, it's rank extravagance to waste your curses on yourself. And I would n't go messing with this question of responsibility, either. *I* don't believe we were meant to settle that," he asserted with his emphatic nod. Vertner had a turn for philosophy in his odd hours, and a sense of his responsibility to religion, to which, when his wife asked him, he gave proper financial expression. He secretly regarded the clergy as a kind of lame ducks whom it was the duty of men blessed with the capacity for turning a penny to help along. It was only vaguely conceivable, under his theory, that they would be in the business if they had known how to rustle for themselves. "The moment you get to portioning out blame, and saying where this would n't have happened if so and so, and how that would have been all right if what's his name," he went on, "you wind yourself into one of those snarls where the more you wind the more you snarl. The simplest way is the woman's way : scrape all the mud in the affair into one ball and fling it at the person concerned in the business that you like least. And the worst possible way is to be a pig about the sack-cloth, and snatch it all for your own wear. Better turn over

most of the sackcloth in this little matter to Jasper, I guess. He deserves it, and it won't trouble him. He'll keep it on the shelf in the original package. There's something about that brother of yours, you know, Deed, that simply takes your admiration by the collar. You can't resist his talent, and it would be a shame to try."

"Oh, I don't try," said Philip, with a lack-lustre face.

He drew Vertner into a doorway out of the confusion of the street, crowded at this hour with the ranchmen and miners who had come into town for the day for supplies, for their mail, or for mining or cattle dickers, or for mere liquid sociability, and had not yet set out on their return. Their freighted burros and saddled ponies pawed the roadway in a long range on either side the street. Sometimes one of the ponies would lift a hoof to the board sidewalk which ran at the level of his knees above the road, and hammer about on the boards until a man would come from a neighbouring saloon and order him to "Whoa there, you——!"

"Well, that's right," said Vertner heartily in response to Philip's negative as they sheltered themselves in the doorway. "If you are a miserable man, and your father an

utterly wretched one——if he has seen Jasper play him the lowest trick ingratitude could invent, if he has seen you apparently do the same, and has come within *that* of losing a wife, and now has had to make his wedding journey a flight from justice——”

“Oh, shut up, Vertner!”

“——An opportunity for parley with the law, then. I don't care what you call it (it's what he thinks it that makes the difference, is n't it?), if, I say, one of the first families in Lone Creek County has come to this in a week, it's a glorious satisfaction to know that the hand that pulled the strings belongs to a Jim-dandy of a talent. There's something nothing less than bang-up about.——Oh, I say, Phil!” he exclaimed remorsefully, as his companion turned away. He clapped his hand upon his shoulder. “I don't mean that guff. I thought——” He caught his eye with a look like pleading in his own. “I thought the other view might comfort you a bit. The tragic we have always with us. Expressive of the feelings, but wearing, you know!”

He blundered on, until Philip stopped him with, “Oh I know, Vertner. Don't think I don't understand that you've been my best friend in all this, and are sticking by me like

the brick you are. Whatever rot I may talk, don't forget that. And when we find my father——"

"Which will be the day after to-morrow," interrupted Vertner cheerfully.

"What? Have you heard?"

Vertner rolled his lips over the cigar in his mouth ambiguously. "Well, there is a sort of clue. But I suppose I have to own that I'm cribbing the date from the general stock of hopefulness. We'll find him, though, wherever he is gone."

"Find him? Well, if I thought we should n't!——" Philip set his teeth in a manner peculiar to him, which Vertner had learned to respect. When it had been a question in Chili of throwing a bridge across a mountain gorge and there had been a call for a volunteer to take the first line across, he remembered that Philip had said quietly, "I'll do it," with that tightening of the muscles of the jaw.

"I suppose he *is* suffering," said Vertner meditatively. "And it's so utterly useless."

"Suffering? A man who never stained his name with so much as the shadow of wrong; a man whom all the State trusts. Think what he will be supposing that he has done.

When I think of that, and think that I am responsible for the thing——!”

“ Oh, confound your responsibility ! ” exclaimed Vertner. “ Did n't I say I'd get that money for you ? Did n't I lead you to rely on me for it ? ”

“ Stuff ! ”

“ And did I get it ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Did I get it in time to do any good ? ”

“ No, but——”

“ Well, then ! ” said Vertner conclusively.

This money, which had come too late, was one of the collateral misfortunes for which Philip blamed himself most severely in the trouble with his father. He knew that Vertner, in the failure of all other chances, had humiliated himself before a man who he had been sure from the beginning would lend him the amount if he would consent to ask him ; and so had obtained it at a price he would not have paid willingly for any personal good. The act, useless as it proved in the event, bound him to Vertner, Philip felt, by a peculiar tie. He had always known him for a good fellow ; he had not supposed him quite as good

a fellow as all that. He knew what it was himself to borrow money where it was lent grudgingly. Some people were great duffers about money, he thought.

Of course neither Philip nor Vertner was in a position to know of the intention with which Deed had pledged the stock at the bank in Leadville; but they had been rightly sure (at first) that he must have gone away with the expectation of finding money elsewhere, and returning to redeem the securities before a question could arise. They had guessed so much as this, but as the weeks passed and he did not return, they were forced to believe that other resources (if he had really gone to seek them,) had failed him, and that, recognizing that he could not come back, he had at least not taken pains to make his whereabouts known.

"I should n't care that we could n't come at him," said Philip, "if we could only let him know."

"Yes, after the pains you took to explain to that receiving teller that your father had asked you to step around and redeem that stock for him, and the pretty way you manœuvred the return of the actual stock itself to Deed's tin box in the bank, where the co-trustee can find it any day he has an unnatural longing for the sight, and after the way you deposited

the other \$25,000 to your father's private account, it's a pity to have him glooming around in some Canadian watering-place, taking himself for an absconding trustee."

"See here, Vertner——" began Philip hotly.

"Oh well!" cried off Vertner. "That is n't the only pity. What gives me a pain is to have to think that we went and wasted a good joke on that bank teller."

"What joke?" asked Philip impatiently.

"The joke of paying back into his old bank the same money your father had just borrowed from it." He quizzed Philip's serious face with his audacious smile.

CHAPTER IV

It had been Vertner's thought—mixed, like many of his thoughts, of kindly intention and an eye to business—to ask Philip and Cutter to take charge of the “Snow Find.” As Vertner said, it would “bear a little more finding, and they were the men to do it.” Beatrice had expressed herself freely about the double meaning which this last clause wore in her husband's mind without shaking him from his purpose. He said it was really one of the best mines in the State: that it would be another “Iron Silver” if you gave it time—and money. The money he hoped Cutter would get from his father, after a while. Cutter's father was not always rich, he knew; but he often was. It was the intermittent stockbroker way. And Cutter, as he worked the mine for himself, would soon have the best of all possible evidence of its magnificent promise. Vertner had visions

of fetching the father out in a special car to see the "Snow Find" for himself, if it came to that. The thing was a bonanza. Vertner even began, in the rosy dreams which he allowed to curl up out of the accomplished fact of the installation of the two young men in charge of the mine, to see the making of a man of business in Cutter. Even Cutter laughed at this, and Philip roared; but Vertner said he knew what he was about—which was strictly true; and he proved himself in earnest about working the mine by advancing Philip a month's salary, when he asked for it. The creditors at Piñon, whom Philip had been unable to silence, as he had hoped, with his father's aid, were growing impudent about the debts they had urged him to contract with servility; and money was a necessity. He sent all that he could spare out of the salary to his creditors, after lending Sandy Dikes \$5, losing \$25 on a horse-race at Pueblo, for which Cutter had given him a tip, and paying his share in a little monthly pension which he had got half a dozen others at Piñon to join him in arranging for Doulton. (Doulton's claim had caved in on him, and there was to be an amputation: they were paying the pension until Mrs. Doulton could get along on the profits of the

saloon she had opened since the accident.) There was also a book for which he had heard Miss Maurice express a wish; and when the bill for it came from Denver, it was higher than he had expected. He told Vertner after the first week that he would have to raise his salary; and Vertner, who was generous and understood, and who was shrewd and remembered Cutter, yielded readily enough.

He offered to raise Cutter's salary also, but Cutter said he should want to get out of the country just as badly, if he had \$25 more a month as he should without it; he added that he was n't worth what he was getting, which he did not believe. He thought himself a good sort of mining engineer, now; and if his present wisdom on the subject of mining were matched against the ignorance he had brought to Colorado in a Pullman, there was something in this estimate of himself.

The "Snow Find" was the mine which Deed had left on Vertner's hands, full of water; and until he could find the money to purchase machinery to pump the water out, he had determined to bend his energies—or rather to let Philip and Cutter bend their energies—to working a new lead, away from the water. The new lead was actually a produc-

tive one when Philip and Cutter began upon it ; and they were now taking out ore which paid fairly.

When Beatrice questioned his motives, now, Vertner unscrupulously silenced her with the magnanimous half of them. She could not deny, when it was put to her with Vertner's cogency of statement, that Philip had been miserable, restless and tormented ; running off on every fresh clue to the end of the State, (at ten cents a mile—a subject for legislation, if there was one, Vertner said), and coming back weary, disheartened and discouraged. She admitted that an occupation which would give him an interest, and prevent him from brooding upon this business of his father's disappearance was a praiseworthy idea ; and she praised Vertner for it, when she was not condemning him for including Cutter in the matter.

“And do you suppose Philip would have gone up there into the hills without him ? ” Vertner asked securely. “A cabin in the hills, strictly by yourself, would cure anyone of the blues. You ought to prescribe for *all* the misery, Trix. Confining yourself to Philip is a limitation of talent.”

“I suppose he does feel that he is doing the best thing he could do, until his father is found, in working at this

mine for him," she admitted irrelevantly, in the need of admitting something. "And if it *should* happen that it turns out as rich as you expect, Ned, why what a splendid thing it will be for him to be able to turn it over to his father on his return, and say——"

"I don't think he'll have to say much. Deed will be glad enough of anything he can raise in the shape of money, by the time he gets back, unless I'm a particularly bad guesser."

"Yes; but he would n't take it from Philip—not after what has passed between them; not after his casting him off like that, and vowing that he would never see him again. You said that yourself, Ned."

"Yes," assented Vertner, yawning,—it was the end of the evening, and he had finished his Denver newspaper, and was stretched cosily in his deep chair before the fire—"I said that he said it. But Deed's vows are n't always 'good until used,' you know. The very passion he expends in making them seems to have a tendency to wear them out early."

"I don't think this one will wear out. What he thought Philip had done was too bad. It had the touch of ingratitude about it that no one can forgive in any wrong. I know

I could n't. And I think Philip is doing just the right thing. It will show his father——”

“That he underrated that mine?” quizzed Vertner with a laugh, as he rose lazily, in preparation for bed. “It will, it will, my dear! That is, it will if Cutter senior is the man I take him for.”

“Ned!”

Vertner smiled the smile of satisfied sophistication at her through his half-closed eyes, as he stretched his arms in a final yawn. “Come!” he said. “Are you ever going to bed?”

PHILIP was glad of the work Vertner offered him at the “Snow Find” because he needed money—he always needed money, and the search for his father was an added channel of expenditure now, and a further hindrance to the payment of his debts at Piñon—but he liked, besides, to feel that his work was doing something more for him than earning the salary Vertner was giving him. It was pleasant to feel that each bucketful of ore that he saw lifted out of the “Snow Find” was of direct advantage to his father.

Until he could find him the next best thing was to be doing something for him. And meanwhile he spent a large part of his salary in following up clues of Deed. They all turned out alike ; after an absence of a day or two he would return with downcast face, and resume work at the mine silently ; and Cutter could not find heart to question him. Even Vertner's light spirit would sometimes droop before their repeated failures ; though he always waked the following morning with a fresh idea, which Philip followed out or pool-pooled, as it happened, but which no longer excited any buoyancy in him. It was maddening to think that his father was making himself unhappy somewhere for the absurdly simple reason that they did not know his address.

The habit of seeing a great deal of Dorothy, and thinking much of her when he was not with her, went along curiously with his unhappiness about his father. He could not talk to her of his father's disappearance, of course, but to see her was to forget his trouble, and he and Cutter both found time from their duties at the "Snow Find," though they could not go together, to ride with her. It sometimes happened that Philip and Dorothy rode alone ; but it

usually fell out that Dick Messiter and Beatrice were of the party. Beatrice was very fond of riding ; and Vertner had been buying her a horse lately with the profits of a little "flyer" in a Leadville mining stock.

Dorothy and Beatrice became fast friends in the intimacy of these rides ; and Philip, though he imagined, alternately, furtherances and failures in Dorothy's kindness for him day by day, was really in the unvarying enjoyment of the type of good-will a woman sometimes gives to a man whom she trusts. All their relation took its colour from those days in the cave, during which they had learned to know each other ; and this should have satisfied Philip, for the moment. Perhaps it might have ; but he was obliged to remember that Messiter had shared those days as well ; and that, with him, they had succeeded many earlier days, the quality of which it was easy to imagine. It seemed impossible that there had been a time, before the snow had brought them acquainted, when he had not known Dorothy, whose existence now was of the fibre of his own life. But such a time had been, and Messiter had plainly been master of its opportunities. He saw him too clearly for the good fellow he was to believe

anything else ; indeed he liked him too well to believe anything else.

Messiter, who still remained, stimulating an echo of his early usefulness in settling the Maurices' house by inventing things to do for Dorothy, would have smiled sadly at this account of his favour with her. He would have said that for those who liked the unafraid, untroubled liking she showed him, it would probably be the sort of thing they liked. Some persons might enjoy the privilege of gazing into those gay, candid, tender, thoughtful eyes,—the eyes which were all these by turns to him, but, in his presence, never shy, nor downcast, nor in any kind of happy difficulties. But, for his part, he must have professed that the absence of all hesitations, all embarrassments, had its gloomy side. It was the kind of relation, he knew, which young men and young women were always pretending to themselves and to each other was their ideal of all that was blessed and comfortable. Had he not gammoned young girls with just such talk on the rocks at Mount Desert, at nineteen? But he found nothing in the situation, as it presented itself, either blessed or comfortable, though he stayed on.

In spite of these lover's doubts, it would be a mistake to

suppose that this was not a happy time for all of them. It was clouded for Philip by the continued fruitlessness of all efforts to find his father, as well as by the fluctuations of Dorothy's feeling toward him, which he was partly conscious of spinning out of his fancy, but constantly ready to credit afresh. Yet he was happy enough to fear a change—to look forward to Jasper's return with a fierce repression of his imagination. How would he and Dorothy meet? What was their present relation? Where would they take up the thread? Was there a tolerable relation toward Dorothy for him, if Jasper still existed for her? These were the questions which he refused to ask himself. They were hints at the threshold of a whole torturing region of speculation, which to enter was to invite useless misery and the need for an immediate decision. Philip hated unpleasant thoughts, and detested immediate decisions; if the banks a mile ahead concealed the enemy, why there was still the mile! It might never be completed for one thing. If it were, one would find something to do when the time came. It was partly a reasonable confidence in himself, but chiefly a constitutional unwillingness to face disagreeable facts, which caused him meanwhile to lounge at the stern of

the boat, finding the river water smooth and lulling under his hand.

Messiter's sunny temper, not being for clouds of any kind, he found what happiness he could in the immediate and agreeable fact that he was permitted to be constantly by Dorothy's side ; while Beatrice, having settled Margaret's trouble to her satisfaction, had crossed her off her list, so to say, and, for the moment, concerned herself only intermittently about her (of course she knew nothing of her husband's concern)—awaiting calmly her return to Maverick, flushed with her bridal happiness, and filled with new ideas about things. She fancied her greatly changed ; it would only show how marriage was the one thing for all women—even for those who did not seem at all to have been intended for its blessings. She fancied Margaret's severity, her primness, her “niceness” about certain matters, as smoothed and softened into the real niceness, against which not even Ned could say anything.

Dorothy had begun to plan for the future of her father and herself in Maverick. The people of the church had been charmed by his first sermon, and, as a matter of fact, it was a capital sermon. Their liking for it suggested to a

number of minds at once that Maurice should be called to the vacant pulpit of St. John's in the Wilderness. As Beatrice said, it was a long time since they had had a regular service, but the lapse had not been due to the unwillingness of the congregation to support a clergyman. It was rather that there were varying ideals in the congregation. But Maurice fitted, in a degree, into all these expectations and wishes. He was a widower, he was not young, his graceful, good-humoured, flattering manner commended him to everyone, and especially to those who sought a successful parish visitor; he was a High Churchman, holding with dignity to his ritual, but careful to avoid grounds of offence, and he preached undeniably good sermons. He was, besides, a trained and enthusiastic musician: on his first trial-Sunday the lady who played the organ fell ill at the last moment, and until a substitute discovered herself, after the second lesson, he himself accompanied the choir he had rehearsed during the week.

It had ended, after some negotiation, in his being summoned. Maurice had told them frankly that he could not refer them to his last parish, giving them his own version of the occurrence which had caused him to leave Laughing

Valley City ; but when the vestry had heard favourably about him from the Dakota parish to which he referred them, and had definitely offered him the post, he told them, with some inward trembling—for his resources were of the slightest, and if this opportunity should fail him he did not know where he should turn—that if he was to remain with them they must grant him a higher salary. The vestry was reluctant ; he firm. It ended in their advancing the salary \$100. It was more than they had ever paid before, they said ; but perhaps they had never had so good a clergyman. Maurice smiled, and did not attempt to deny it. He did not believe there were many men of his sort to be had for \$800 a year.

He was now making ready to preach certain sermons selected by Dorothy from a considerable collection sent over the mountains on a burro by the ladies at Laughing Valley City ; and was occupied in going about making the acquaintance of his new flock.

His portly, yet shapely and well-carried figure, his round, rubicund, smiling, clean-shaven clerical face, his fortunate voice, his admirable manner soon began to be familiar in Maverick. It pleased Dorothy to see how popular her

father had already become. She looked forward with pleasure to remaining a long time in Maverick. Perhaps he would set about raising funds to build a more permanent church. She remembered that the parish in which her father had remained longest was one in which he had built a new church. But there seemed no elements of discord here, none of the foolish, tiresome people who had made trouble in other parishes. Perhaps they should remain for ever. Perhaps—it was a new country, a largeish town, there was an opportunity—perhaps he might one day be Bishop of the diocese.

Dorothy's plans were made with a pencil and a little memorandum pad, from which she tore a number of sheets without finding a comfortable relation between her father's salary, (after adding their trifling income to it), and the prices prevailing in Maverick for rent, food and clothing. She avoided troubling her father about practical questions when she could ; but, before they left the hotel, where they had been staying since their arrival, she felt that she must set the result of her calculations before him. When she attacked him on the subject at breakfast one morning, he smiled cheerfully.

“ Oh, we shall get along, I think ! We shall get along ! ”

He rubbed his large, carefully kept hands together, after spreading his napkin over his ample form. "Have you included your mother's legacy in your calculations, Dorothy?"

"Oh yes! But with your salary it only makes a little over a thousand dollars. I'm afraid we ought not to have taken so expensive a house."

His smile revealed the even glitter of perfect teeth beneath a moustache which had been criticised as jaunty for a clergyman. "Why, my dear, we could n't live in an unplastered house, could we?"

His smile and tone made it seem preposterous, but Dorothy said, doubtfully, "I don't know. Perhaps when we found that we could get nothing plastered under \$400 we ought to have felt that we must take one of the others."

"Oh, no! Why even at Laughing Valley we had a plastered house. Surely it does n't seem an unreasonable ambition,—a plastered house. And even if it were, depend upon it, the clergy get what they insist on. A man's needs are measured by the account he gives of them; and, in turn, he is measured by his needs. If a clergyman shows himself content with a hovel he not only won't get a decent

dwelling ; but when it comes to a question of some other need, he will be thought as capable of doing without whatever it may be that he wants as he showed himself capable of doing without the house. I have always found that I got what I wanted by taking the proper stand. I have found that people of a certain class respect the inability of a gentleman to do without things which they have never felt the need of."

"But, father—" protested Dorothy, and paused. She had been about to ask if the price of having all that one wanted might not be that some one else should have less than he wanted—less than his own, perhaps. She was glad not to have said it : an observation which seems true in the largest bearing may be quite false to the little fact which suggests it, and which one is tempted to try by it. Her father was right of course. He was always right.

Philip and Cutter, in their cabin at the "Snow Find" often discussed Maurice. They agreed that it was a pity that Dorothy should have such a man for a father, or that he should happen to have such a daughter ; but they avoided the discussion of Dorothy herself by tacit agreement. As Philip drew on his town-going boots for the fifth time during

a single week, however, and began to rummage in his chest for a white shirt, Cutter made no further effort to contain himself.

"You're not going in for a boiled shirt!" he exclaimed as Philip exchanged the loose flannel of the West for the Eastern affectation. Cutter—in pursuit of his loyalty to the civilization which had produced him—had never disused it; though the washerwoman at Piñon had forced him to go to a Chinaman by returning the first white shirts he sent her, contemptuously rough-dried. "Oh, I say! This is too much! Do you know, I've had an idea once or twice lately, Deed, that you are rather hard hit. Tremendously nice girl!" he murmured to the cigarette he was lighting.

"Oh, yes, she's nice enough, if that's all," owned Philip, rummaging in his army chest for some collars, which he fished out at last, limp and yellow from their confinement of a year. "Do you suppose there are any memories in New York long enough to recall the time when this was the pre-eminently pre-eminent shape in collars?" he asked, holding up a bundle of them.

"Stocks may have come in again, for all I know," answered Cutter. "Ask somebody more in the way of that sort of

information, Crusoe, my boy, than Man Friday. But, I say, Deed : she *is* nice !”

“I think I remember agreeing with you in that observation,” said Philip. “But I’ll sign a treaty with you to regard her as nice, if that does n’t satisfy you : I’ll give bonds, I’ll mortgage myself as security for her niceness, if you like. Come !” The eagerness of his manner was a trifle out of key with this sort of easiness ; but Cutter forbore his jibes.

“I say : I’m awfully glad for you, old man !” He had got himself on his feet ; and wrung Philip’s hand in silence.

“Are you ? What a romantic dog you are, Cutter ! It’s uncommonly good of you.” He turned to the reconsideration of the collars. “I wish I saw any cause to be glad.”

“Don’t you ? Then it’s because you are infernally ungrateful. I’m bound to say that I do.”

“Yes,” said Philip with a weary smile ; “it is you, I believe, who looks for big things from the ‘Little Cipher.’ You’ve got such a lot of faith, Cutter. It makes a cheerful companion of you. But you are hideously unreliable, you

know. You'll be wanting to convince me that it is the honourable obligation of a beggar to go and propose marriage to somebody or other, next. Jasper has furnished me with just the sort of situation for you to try your abominable cheerfulness on. Turn it on, Cutter. Rub up your lamp and get to work. I'm ready for any lie, if there's hope in it."

"Pshaw! There are paying properties in the world besides the ranch your brother has swindled you out of your share in. You forget the 'Pay Ore.'"

"Oh, no I don't—not when I'm in high spirits, and don't need what hope there is in it. But a man can't live on a hope like that, Cutter; and if he could, a woman could n't, and no man could ask her to. And if he could ask her, he could n't ask her father to let her." Cutter smiled at this reference to Maurice, who was a kind of joke between them; and Philip smiled with him, ruefully. The idea of Maurice allowing his daughter to marry any one but a rich man struck them both as humorous; yet Cutter had to say, to console Philip, rather than because he believed it—

"I don't know. There's some good in the old fraud, after all."

“Oh, don’t go turning your cheerfulness on Maurice. You have n’t got the candle power.”

“You might let me illuminate a little, and try,” laughed Cutter. “But it *is* a sombre subject, that’s a fact. You’ll have to elope.”

“Shut up, Cutter!”

“Well, then you’ll have to wait for his consent. Put it either way. I’m only trying to please you; and a dash of grey in the groom’s hair is n’t so bad, if you come to that.”

“Oh, drop it! Your despair is worse than your cheerfulness.”

“Well, it does seem to fit the facts of the case a little closer.”

“Oh, you’re right! You’re right. It does; and I know it when I’m not with her; but when I am—— Damn it, man, I love her! I *can’t* lose her!”

“Now you’re talking sense.”

“Am I? It strikes me as a good deal more like the other thing. No; I always come around to a clear sight of the situation —— Jasper has fixed me out. It’s as if he knew I must meet and care for the girl he once —— Bah!” Philip turned on his heel.

“See here ! Have you given up your faith in the ‘Pay Ore’ ? ”

“No ;” growled Philip, “and I have n’t given up my faith in the coming Brotherhood of Man, but I would n’t ask a girl to go to housekeeping on it.”

This was no reason why they should not thresh out together again, for the hundredth time, the actual grounds for faith in the future of the “Pay Ore” : they said together again, and managed to say it without smiling, that the ore-bearing vein was there ; that they were taking out good mineral all around the “Pay Ore” on the Hill ; that it was a question of finding out which way the vein dipped, and a question of the capital and patience necessary to reach it ; and they agreed that Ryan had the capital and the patience. Philip ridiculed Cutter’s faith, as he always did when they spoke of this subject together ; but it was a way of playing his own hope, and they both knew it. Philip hoped rather easily ; and most easily as a refuge from despair. He liked to be comfortable ; and despair was uncomfortable. If he chose skepticism for an outward seeming, sometimes, it was by way of hedging : one’s hopes did not always come off, and a sophisticated doubt looked better on the record afterward.

"You'll live to see Ryan with his pick in that vein, yet," Cutter concluded. He had got to the end of his mining engineer's argument, and was indulging his gift of amiable prophesy.

"Shall I?" retorted Philip. "It will be a pretty table u. But I don't know why we trouble ourselves about it, unless it is to avoid the point."

"What *is* the point?" He looked steadily at Philip who smiled without amusement. "Oh!" he exclaimed with intelligence. "Well, yes——" Cutter smiled. "Eu don't you think——?"

"No sir: I don't."

Cutter bent forward. "Why, what's the trouble?"

"Usual trouble. Another fellow."

"What? You think she cares for that——?"

"That gentleman, as you were about to call him, Mr. Cutter, is a great sight too good for any shoe-string tying of mine."

"Oh, look here——Well, Messiter is a good fellow. I admit it. But what of it? Abstract considerations of that sort don't hold in a case of this kind."

"Oh, I beg your pardon, Cutter," exclaimed Philip, as

he buttoned one of the collars about his neck. "I forgot that you were an expert in these things. Well, what does hold? Out with it! Let's have the latest! Don't put me off with any of your mouldy, out-of-date decisions. Give me the brand-newest opinion there is—something that can't be reversed before I can get her assent to it—Court of Appeals, preferably."

Cutter pulled at his moustache, thoughtfully; and blew some smoke in Philip's direction. "Well, *you* might hold, for one thing. I have a notion she likes you."

"Thanks," returned Philip drily. "I believe the worst of us have a kindness for our coolies, our dragomen, our slaves. *Would n't* a woman like a man who made a profession, a calling, a vocation of her; who revered her boots; whose idea of happiness was being stepped on by them; who spent his nights in dreaming new ways to be an ass for her sake, and his days in carrying out his dreams? *Would n't* she? I should hope so."

"You *have* been going it a little strong with her, this last fortnight. I suppose she has been rather enjoying the spectacle."

"See here, Cutter," said Philip hotly, "if you think Miss

Maurice capable of torturing a man for her amusement merely, you never were more mistaken in your life. She's not that sort. The fineness, the dignity, the genuineness and truth of that girl, Cutter——Oh, the devil ! ”

Cutter was laughing.

THE servant at the Maurices' cottage said that Miss Maurice was in the parlour. The house on which Dorothy and her father had finally fixed was the usual frame shell of the newer towns of the West. There were better houses in Maverick—the Vertners lived, by comparison, in a mansion—but there were cruder buildings too : log cabins chinked with mortar, and houses constructed out of disused packing boxes, and roofed with canvas. On the ground floor, besides the kitchen and the dining-room, there was only the pleasant little room at the front of the house ; and it was this that the maid-servant called a “ parlour.” It was, in fact, Dorothy's sitting room and sewing room ; though Maurice spoke of it as their drawing-room. As Philip turned the knob on the door of this room, he felt a hand upon it on the other side, and releasing his own grasp, the door opened. Jasper

stood before him in the act of farewell to Dorothy. He lifted his head, and seeing Philip in the doorway, stretched out his hand to him with his courtly smile. Philip, drawing back to let him pass, kept his gaze fixed on his face, looking him in the eye motionlessly, with a black glance of scorn. He would not see the hand. Flushing to his temples, Jasper gave a contemptuous little laugh and walked by him, turning once more to bow to Miss Maurice.

When Philip had got himself through the door and into the room, he went up to Dorothy in a dazed way, and offered her his hand. He thought he perceived a kind of reluctance which she conquered in the imperceptible moment that passed before she took his hand in the frank and hearty clasp, which had been from the beginning one of the little things that he had liked best in her. Then she asked him quickly if he had seen her typewriter.

CHAPTER V

IN his first groping, and bitter explanations of it to himself, Philip saw how natural it was that he should find Jasper with her. He had not known of his return ; and he must have come this morning, as he was certain that he had not been in Maverick the day before ; but being returned, and hearing of her presence in Maverick, what could be more in the course of things than a meeting of old lovers, long separated, in the first hours of Jasper's home-coming ? Oh, it was natural enough !

"A typewriter !" he said, in the easy and flowing tones of one who tries to be easy. "I congratulate you. It's a great thing. You will write your father's sermons, now, I suppose."

"I don't know," she said. "Yes, perhaps, if I can learn."

It was, in fact, a longing desire with her,—to write her father's sermons for him at his dictation; he detested the manual labour of writing. But nothing seemed quite so possible and worth while as it had seemed a moment ago.

“Do you know anything about it? Perhaps you can show me,” she said to make conversation. She chafed under this difficult exchange: it had never been like this between them, hitherto. They had always talked freely, and naturally; it was one of the things which made this Mr. Deed a pleasant man to get along with she had thought. He was so straightforward, so simple and direct: he had no attitude, he never got himself up, he had not even that man's pose in talking to a woman, which she disliked. He talked to her, she felt sure, as he might have talked to a man. He understood things without being told. Men to whom one had to explain irritated her. And now he was not going to understand; and he was defending himself from the natural course of their usual talk with an artifice.

Was it in fact true, then, that such a thing as a frank and cordial relation between young men and young women was an impossibility? She heard Philip saying that he had

once spent a month or two in studying the typewriter, as she asked this question of herself. It was going to fall in with one of his young plans for being successful in some other way than the way his father wished, and had been dropped when the plan had followed the other plans. She heard this distantly while she passed in hasty review all possible and impossible occasions for the scene at the door and for his constraint. Was the blame hers, in any way, she asked herself? Or, whosoever the blame, might it be her opportunity to reconcile them? Dorothy's goodness was always impulsive: the people who did not like the consequences of some of her rash bursts of kind-heartedness, said that it was absurd. It was true that she was good in haste, and often repented at leisure; but she liked better to stumble and wound herself, as she must, in her rush to help some one who had fallen, than to suck wise maxims about prudence in contented inaction. She kept a generous scorn for the mincing caution of the proverbs. All proverbs were stingy and selfish, she thought, and taught one to live for one's self in the handsomest security.

She went to the typewriter and began to finger it with the gingerly deliberateness of the novice, while he stood above

her looking on, and they exchanged question and answer without much notion on either side of what they were talking about. She was feeling, with a woman's sense of social obligation, that she must do something to keep the affair moving ; while her kindly puzzlement about the little drama at the door went on steadily in her thoughts.

Philip was capable of listening at any time to the taking modulations of her sweet, rich Southern voice, without troubling his head about what she was saying ; and it was in this dreamy way that he was listening to her now, thinking also, as if it were a novel thought, how utterly pretty she was. She was dressed in a house gown of black, with the daintiest suggestion of a dark green velvet at the throat, and shoulders, and sleeves ; and the quietness of this effect seemed to exalt the beauty of her fresh colouring, her good, honest, sincere, admirable eyes, her shapely face. How she stared at her typewriting ! He wished she would look about at him. It was two minutes since he had seen her eyes ; the whimsical brown, floating intermittently in their grey depths, would have had time to change or go.

There suddenly seemed nothing further to say, and leaning back from the typewriter she patted her hand upon

her dress, and called, "Here, Jack!" A great Newfoundland dog, which had been lying on the floor by the side of the typewriter leaped up, placing his forepaws in her lap, and wagging his tail. Jack had been given her by Messiter while they were at Laughing Valley City, and it had been one of the pains of her hurried departure that she must leave him behind; but Messiter had arranged to have him brought over the Pass by careful hands, and it was a week since he had been restored to her. She was extremely fond of him. He plunged his paws in a moment into the keyboard of the typewriter, and Philip dragged him off.

The diversion seemed to restore them to themselves, for Philip said, more in the tone of their usual talk than anything that had been said since he entered the room, "I did n't know you had a typewriter."

And, glad of the change, Dorothy answered, "I have n't. To really *have* a typewriter I suppose one should know how to use it, if only a very little; and besides, it does n't belong to me, but to a clergyman, a friend of my father, who left it for me to try. He has gone East on his vacation, and spent a night with us on his way down from Leadville."

"You will like it immensely. You will hate him when he comes to take it back."

She shook her beautiful head, laughing. "I don't know. It makes me—wriggle!" she said. "I can't bear to pick out the letters. I don't like the noise. And it's all so mechanical, so barbarous! It's a great convenience, I suppose, and I shall go on with it on papa's account, if I find I can. But I can't see how any one could *like* it! What is there to like?"

"Everything! Let me show you!"

"Oh, if you do it like that!" she exclaimed, as he rattled off a number of sentences, in the seat she gave up to him.

"You *must* do it like that!" he rejoined, without looking up from the key-board over which his fingers twinkled bewilderingly. "You didn't think that you were to go hesitatingly from letter to letter, with a little fearsome pause between each jump, like Eliza in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* escaping across the floating ice, did you?"

He was feeling much happier now. After all, it had only been a school-girl and boy engagement. He knew that it no longer existed—that it had not existed this four years. Was it likely that——? Pshaw! Had not Jasper called

on the day of his arrival in the place? He had not forgotten. Did he ever forget any purpose? He brought himself back to the consideration of the typewriter lesson with an effort.

She was interested. "You won't mind if I ask questions?" she said, as she consented to try again for herself. She let her fingers idle over the letters without pressing their white circles. "Why is n't the alphabet set in order?"

"The better to puzzle you, my dear," quoted Philip, absently, but enjoying the use of the epithet.

"There is a better reason than that," returned Dorothy. She laughed, flushing a little at his phrase.

"Yes," he admitted, "you will find it a very good thing, after you have gone a little farther, to have the most-used letters nearest your hand. Suppose, now, you put in a fresh sheet of paper, and try a sentence or two on your own account."

He inserted the paper, showed her the use of the little device for separating words, taught her to pull back the running gear at the top at the warning of the bell, made plain the means of governing the space between lines; and then gave her a little lecture on the position of the small

and capital letters, the punctuation marks and numerals. She listened with serious attention, and, as he bent over to illustrate his meaning, withdrew herself to leave space for the play of his arms, while he pressed the letters, or caught back the sliding rack.

In this close and amiable proximity the constraint between them, of a few moments back, seemed already to have aged itself into an unhistoried past. She was wondering how this could be the man who had given Jasper the look at the door which she could not forget; and he was saying to himself that in all the world there were not eyes like those he looked down into when she would glance up suddenly from time to time to ask him a question, or to give one of her flashing turns to his replies, with that charming manner of reserved freedom which was constantly a new grace in her.

She became proficient enough at last to write out coherent sentences for herself, and together they found the things she wrote very amusing.

"Suppose you see if you can read what I write from the movement of my fingers, Mr. Deed," she said. "You are not to turn the cylinder up to look; but only to read, if you

can, as I go along." She began in a kind of embarrassment, and did not get on as well with the first words as she had in her earlier experiments. But she tried again, in a moment, and completed the sentence with a little air of bravado.

She kept her eyes on the key-board, but as he did not speak she glanced up at him hastily.

"Oh!" exclaimed Philip recalled to himself. "I was to read from your fingers. Well, shall we begin?"

Dorothy laughed nervously. "We have begun," she said. "Did n't you see?"

"Oh, yes, yes!" assented he. "Or no—I was—." It was impossible to say that he had been watching the movement of her fingers and speculating upon the question whether all women had such hands, and why he had never noticed how adorably they were contrived for type-writing. He had got to the point of remembering that he had seen a number of young girls hammering away at type-writers in offices without being moved by the spectacle, when her glance called him back.

"Will you write it again?" he asked. "I will really watch this time."

"Oh, I don't think I could write it again," returned Dorothy quickly.

"Why not? As a punishment for inattention? I suppose I've deserved it," he said.

"No. I don't think I ought."

"It was a real sentence, then. I claim it as a right, in that case. You have made a communication to me, Miss Maurice. You've no right to withhold it. It has passed out of your hands."

"Yes," owned she, with amusement, "that's true, but it did n't pass into your eyes. I offered it to you, and you would n't look. You were engaged."

"Then you *are* punishing me, and that's equally unfair."

"No—no I'm not," she denied doubtfully, "but—" with a whimsical smile that enchanted him——"why it was not discreet, what I wrote." She smiled up at him.

"No?" he asked in pure enjoyment.

"No." And then, in a moment, "You would n't urge me to be *in-discreet*?"

"No, I should n't urge it. I should insist upon it. I do. Come!" he said, and she wondered why she liked

his air of domination better than Jasper's, though she did not altogether dislike Jasper's.

"And the demon said unto me, 'Write!'" paraphrased she.

"It was an angel," said Philip.

"Was it?" She bent her hands hesitantly above the key-board. "But you must promise to stay, angel," she said, suddenly arresting herself. She glanced up doubtfully at his face. "No, I won't write it again. It was n't wise; it was n't—nice."

"That settles it, then: I *must* see it!"

"No," repeated Dorothy. "You would n't like it. It was a quite wrong thing to ask." Her fingers hovered above the key-board, meditatively. She suddenly began to pick out the letters.

Philip followed her fingers closely. He read, letter by letter: "*Why would n't you speak to your brother at the door?*"

He rose abruptly from his stooping position above the machine, colouring painfully.

She looked up, at his impulsive movement, and rose herself. "Oh, what have I done?" she exclaimed at

sight of his face. After a miserable pause, "You needn't tell me. It was very wrong of me. I knew it. But it was n't I who asked, Mr. Deed? I would never have asked,—not myself. I thought," she said, gathering her explanations painfully—"or the typewriter thought—it was n't I—it escaped me—that perhaps I could reconcile, bring you togeth—" The words died upon her lips. "It was a foolish thought, I see, and yet," she added, with recovered dignity, "perhaps I had a kind of right to it. Your brother is an old friend"—Philip looked up at this—"and you—you have been very good. We have always felt that we partly owe our lives to you—father and I—since the day of the storm, and—" Philip lifted his hand with an appealing gesture. "Well, there's nothing else to say, except that I'm very sorry. But, oh, Mr. Deed," she cried suddenly, "why won't you make it up with him, whatever it is—and be—be friends? I'm sure he can't have done anything very bad—nothing that could make it right that you should turn from him. He is good,—sometimes he is hard, and he is always masterful: yes—but he is good. You must feel that."

"Oh, yes," said Philip, "I feel that."

She glanced at him doubtfully, as if in question of his tone.

“I’m sure I’ve every reason to know of his goodness,” she said, after a pause, with feeling. “If it had n’t been for that—”

“You would n’t have been here to appreciate it with me, perhaps. No, I remember that. It’s another of the quiet things, done without talk or fuss, by which Jasper has put me in his debt. I owe him a great deal, Miss Maurice—more than you know.”

Again she hesitated at an indefinable note in his voice ; but she said immediately with her usual openness,

“I suppose an elder brother has always that great advantage,—the advantage of being able to do a great deal for a younger brother. It must be very pleasant to him, and he must always wish, if he is a man like your brother, to do always a little more, that he may be able to make you forget his friendly advantage over you by the mere quantity of his friendliness.”

In the midst of his pain and bitterness, Philip could not help smiling faintly at this, but he said, with less care about his tone, “Oh, yes ! I’ve never had to complain of

short weight with Jasper. He does n't do things by halves. When he does a really friendly thing he heaps the measure up and runs it over. I don't always know what to do with so much magnanimity. You can't put a landslide in your pocket, you know, Miss Maurice, and sometimes you can't even find your manners in time to make your bow."

She could not avoid feeling the sardonic undertone this time, and she thought she saw, at once, that the cause of offence between them, whatever it was, was largely due to Mr. Philip Deed's sensitive, almost nervous pride; and she thought, too, that she could guess, pretty clearly, from her knowledge of the two men, something about what would be the usual situation between them. She could see how Philip might detest his brother at times for his very power of doing him favours. She knew how that was herself. She was painfully aware in herself of the strain of meanness, or self-will, or conceit,—she did not know what it was—that made the kind of generosity which is open-handed enough to allow another to be generous among the most difficult kinds of unselfishness and she could understand—yes, she could understand entirely,—how Philip (whose pride would be less manageable than her own by

the degree in which it was a man's and commanding) would feel this peculiarly. The very delicacy with which Jasper would try to conceal a kindness would be an added offence : the need for delicacy was itself humiliating. She could imagine how Philip would become angered on provocation of this sort, and how Jasper would helplessly make the matter worse—not that there would be any way of making it better—by his forbearance. It would be the kind of case in which neither was to blame, and in which each must blame the other.

Filled with this idea, she said, with a note of sympathy in her voice that at first bewildered, and then angered Philip, and finally caused him to laugh a little to himself at the completeness of her error, "I'm sure we must all have felt that. It's strange, is n't it, that it should be so hard to *accept* a kindness as we all find it? One would think that the effort connected with a kindness would be all over when it had been done. It is n't so very easy even to do it ; but to receive it needs heroism. At least I find it does. And I can understand how you would feel that way about your brother, even when you were most grateful to him ; and you would all the time be divided between a wish to

make him feel how much you appreciated his kindness, and a wish to box his ears."

"Oh, it's not a *divided* wish!" said Philip, falling in with her mistake, as the easiest defence that offered; and at this they both laughed.

"His ears must be smarting most of the time," said she, as her laugh ended in a smile.

"Why, no; not all the time," returned Philip unwarily.

"You mean—?" she began, still smiling.

"Nothing that I'd better tell you," he said, quickly withdrawing.

"Oh, Mr. Deed," she exclaimed, with an electrical return to soberness, "I see that there is something really serious between you—something that I must n't intrude on. Forgive me! I have been thinking it one of those little disagreements that a word would set right—one of those wretched mistakes where two persons need only to be explained to each other. I see I can't do it; but you can, Mr. Deed."

"What? Explain myself to Jasper?"

"I don't know—Make it right with him, or whatever men call it. Some one has always to play the generous

part, don't you think, where there has been—has been a disagreement?"

"No, Miss Maurice, I can't do that." He turned away from her and strode toward the window.

"Oh, that is not like you, Mr. Deed! He would not hesitate, I am sure, in your place."

"In my place?" returned he. She began to stammer a reply; but he said, "Oh, I beg your pardon—my place, in the wrong? No, my brother would not hesitate in my place."

"I did not say that," she put in sorrowfully. She saw that she had implied it.

"It does n't need saying, Miss Maurice. You only recognize a universal fact. There are laws of character, you know, and a planetary orbit is wobbly to them. Everybody who knows us at all would know, without telling, that in any question between us I must be in the wrong."

"And are you in the wrong in this?" she asked, earnestly. "Tell me frankly. I will believe whatever you say. You bewilder me. I don't know what to think. Tell me!" she repeated.

Philip laughed harshly. "You must ask Jasper that."

"I will," she said.

"No, don't, Miss Maurice. Don't on any account ! Don't think of such a thing !"

"Ah, he would be more fair !"

"Promise me that you will not say a word of this to Jasper !"

"Tell me yourself, then, Mr. Deed."

Philip took a turn up and down the room. "I can't," he said at last.

"You see what you leave me to think," she said, sadly.

"Nothing good of me," he answered bitterly.

She glanced up at his face. The frankness and genuineness which she had always liked in his look shone through the hurt which possessed him, and gave her confidence to say, looking up to the tall, strong-limbed figure, standing above her, "Do you think it just to your brother to leave him under the imputation of such a silence ?"

Philip started. "Jasper ?" he said.

"Surely. Your silence implies—it seems to say that your brother is somehow much in the wrong ; or else—"

"Or else ?" asked Philip steadily.

“I will not say what else. But if that is so it is fair,—it is right that you should tell me.” She sat down abruptly, as if not quite certain of herself.

Philip felt, girdingly, the extreme inconvenience attaching to all endeavours to do the fair-minded thing ; the impossibility, namely, of explaining with decency.

“In order that you may not be thinking *me* much in the wrong?” he said. “No, Miss Maurice, I could n’t do that.” He turned away.

“You are not fair,” she said after a moment, with dignity. “I do not know that there is any right or wrong in the matter. I am ignorant of everything but that you would not bow to your brother in my presence. I have put my plea on the score of peacemaking, and if you feel that I have meddled I am rightly served ; but I have a right to ask why you should put a slight on a gentleman whom you meet here as——as”——her voice broke——“as my guest, Mr. Deed.”

He came back and stood before her. “You *have* a right to ask that, Miss Maurice, and perhaps I have no right not to answer you. But I can not answer you.”

“Then I must think——?”

"That I have done a wrong to Jasper which I am unwilling to repair or own. Yes, Miss Maurice."

"I do not mean that," she said wistfully, and he saw that she was on the verge of tears, yet had to blunder savagely on.

"What else can you mean? There is but the choice. You must believe in Jasper or in me."

"Oh, I knew it!" she cried, as if to herself. "I foresaw it! It was for that that I had to try to make it right between you. I could not bear——" She broke down suddenly.

"You mean that you wished to keep us both for friends. You know now that that is impossible. We are enemies. We cannot have or keep a common friend. Which will you choose?"

The passionate tone of demand roused her. She straightened herself imperceptibly in her seat on the couch, and raised her head, looking up and confronting his flushed face.

"I will answer your question when you have answered mine," she said.

She rose and held out her hand listlessly. Philip took it as formally, and suddenly left the room. His head was down. He felt sick—spiritually sick to his inmost fibre.

CHAPTER VI

PHILIP went out and got on his horse, and rode furiously toward the "Snow Find." This was the end, he supposed. And for this, again, he had to thank Jasper. He gnashed his teeth as he set his spur in the pony's flank and swept over the long level stretch by the river, outside the town. He had made a fool of himself again, and, as usual, not in a way in which Jasper would have made a fool of himself. His sense of the unhandsomeness, of the impossibility of telling her of the actual state of the case between them seemed in this open light of the prairie, with the wind blowing in his face, an incredible piece of folly. Why should he consider Jasper? Would he have spared him in the same situation?

He saw at once that this had nothing to do with the matter, and that it was not for Jasper's sake that he had held his tongue. It was for his own : he could n't have gone on living in

the body of a man who had told her that. If he had told it he knew very well with what object he would have spoken. He would have done it to malign his rival to her ; (it had come to that between him and Jasper ; he might as well face it), he would have done it to take a sneaking advantage with a woman of an opportunity to spike another man's guns. That would be bad enough with any man for his rival ; but with Jasper it would be a thing which he would never be able to hold up his head after doing. It became too dirty a piece of reprisal to think of. The perception of the impossibility of doing anything to Jasper's injury, which he had urged upon his father, had laid a firm and withholding grip upon him in the midst of the temptation to tell her everything ; and now it reasserted itself as a final motive—as a thing not to be questioned, or dodged ; as a principle to which he must be faithful, wholly without regard to what it might cost him. It had cost him indirectly his father's friendship, already, and had driven his father to the wretched refuge of flight from an imagined evil ; and now it had probably cost him his own happiness. He cursed Jasper, as he thought of it, between his teeth.

He was glad to be going to Durango on the morrow to

seek his father ; he thought he should remain a week. But in the event he was back the second day. It had become a necessity to him to see her if only at a hopeless distance.

Dorothy often bit her lip in the days immediately following Philip's call, when she thought of the part she had played. She had been wrong in meddling, of course, and she accused herself bitterly ; but she also accused him. What right had he to drag her into the question between himself and his brother—whatever it was ? Why should she take sides ? She said to herself that, whatever he might do, he should not change her neutrality. She was the friend of both. What effect could any quarrel between them have upon that fact ? She was most their friend when she refused to allow their difference to invade her relation to them. She was grateful to Jasper for refraining from making on his part so difficult a demand upon her friendship ; she felt his silence about the whole matter to be a fine generosity. It delicately implied the real character of the difference between the brothers as she had guessed it from the first : it was part of that forbearance which he would have used to avoid the quarrel itself, and which he would now be the first to tender to his brother if he would accept it. The other kind of

generosity—the freedom with which Philip gave himself and all that he had in the smaller daily matters, she saw was, after all, a less deep and genuine unselfishness than this patient restraint and self-effacement of Jasper's. In smaller things his attitude had not the charm of Philip's gay and thoughtless open-handedness ; but when a serious opportunity arose—an opportunity for a brave and self-denying magnanimity, it was easy to see which was the stronger. She said to herself that it was true, what she had often thought : that Philip was light.

When a woman makes reflections like these it would be a mistake to seek their basis wholly in the psychological facts with which she believes herself to be reasoning. It was at all events true that, before Dorothy had matured all of these thoughts about the character of the brothers, Philip had remained away from the house several days ; and that a certain chivalric reserve in Jasper's bearing toward an old question between them, had renewed in her a vague remorse.

She had supposed herself to have settled all that ; to have put it away in the lumber-room of her memory, where she need only visit it in those moments of sentiment when a

dreamy willingness to pain herself possessed her. But a discarded lover is both a more material and a more importunate fact when he happens to be in the same town than when he lives before the mental vision only in the letter of dignified complaint which must be answered with the statement of an unhappy truth. Jasper, in the flesh, patient, unreproachful and obdurately faithful to a love which she had fancied as dead in him as it was in her, was a different man from the one she had pictured as suffering for as long a time as her action had remained a vivid theme of remorse to her; and as getting over it by the same gradual process through which she had emerged from her remorse. He had not got over it, and he was by her side.

Their engagement, if one could call it that—if it was the kind of engagement on which marriage is supposed to follow, Dorothy believed that she had never called it that to herself—had been one of the school boy and girl follies at which one smiles with wonder at twenty-five, and tells to one's grandchildren at sixty with a fond laugh, and a passing inward question touching the colour of those curls now. It had been a pleasant diversion between them—the kind of thing which is a little more intense and a little more enter-

taining than the tennis that one would be playing at that age if one were not engaged in being engaged ; but to think of it as the sort of stuff of which one would make a life, was to speak from the disordered outlook upon things in which all measures and values melt into a mess of triviality.

It had lasted between them until Dorothy began to go out into society, and to see the world and other men. She did not begin to compare, then, but she perceived a betrothal to be a different matter from the agreeable plaything it had seemed at school : she began to question with her conscience whether she had a right to go on with so serious a thing unseriously. Was it dealing fairly by him ? She saw that it was not : yet she tried, with a woman's devotion to an impossible unselfishness, to keep it up. Jasper had gone West to the ranch by this time, and in degree as the affair seemed wrong and mistaken to her, she found herself endeavouring to make up to him for the wrong (which, if it was really any of hers, was hers unconsciously), by writing him more faithfully. This, too, seemed dishonest, after a time, and, in despair, she let the correspondence flag, believing, or hoping that he would divine what had happened, and that he would save her the pain of explaining. Surely

it was natural enough ; he was a man by this time, as she was a woman, and he must know how inevitable it was.

He perceived as quickly as she could have desired that there was a change ; but he showed no inclination to spare her in defining it. Brought face to face with the necessity for action, she passed a bitter time, in which she struggled with her conscience and the proprieties. To a young girl it still seems doubtful whether, after all, she may not better wreck her life and a man's than be talked about. In her highest moments of self-sacrifice she thought she could go on with it : then it would come time to write him a letter and she would see that she could not even do so much as that. How was she to live with him for fifty years ?

Jasper's complaint took at last that tone of demand which lay under the surface of his most pliant moods ; and in the end she saw that she must write him all that was in her heart. It was a very right-spirited letter, telling him the bare truth : that she did not love him as she had supposed, that to marry with no better feeling than she could bring to him would be a permanent wrong to both him and her, and would merely procure their common unhappiness ; and begging him to release her from their engagement. Jasper

came on to the Pennsylvania city where her father was just then settled over a church ; and an interview followed of the sort which men and women remember on their death beds. But she did not yield. And Jasper went back to the ranch a changed man. He was hard about women, now : he felt himself cruelly misused. He was very bitter. He said to himself that he did not care what he did now. She was responsible for it. He had said as much to her in his anger. Dorothy, in fact, stood for and symbolized every good thought that he had ever had : she was the goddess of his dreams of being some time a little cleaner and straight-forwarder man than he had yet contrived to be. He was accustomed to say that she could do anything with him, and he had kept her in a species of bondage to this, while they had been together during their engagement.

This was one of the facts which had wrought upon Dorothy while it was still a question whether she should do right to break the engagement ; it was part of the perilous power that there is for every woman in the passionate need for her of a man who does not on other accounts create an answering need in her. It is perhaps a phase of the mother instinct, into which all forms of woman's love tend to dissolve ; but

it is certainly always an argument with a woman strong out of all proportion to its actual validity ; and it had not only been a part of the reluctant push toward the self-sacrifice she had once contemplated, but, in meeting Jasper, the sense of it was found to have still a power for pain.

She was surprised and chagrined that it should be so, but so it was ; and in the solitude of her chamber at night, after Jasper had taken away his melancholy eyes, with the look of a settled sorrow in them, and she freed herself from the influence of his patient reserve about all that had been between them, she wept miserable tears. She dried them when she remembered to be indignant at his attitude. She would rather a thousand times be upbraided for what she had done—if she had done anything—than to be arraigned by that deferential silence which forbearingly would not bring its charge. It was a studied insult she said to herself. But the next day it seemed a chivalry beyond praise. It seemed this most when she recognized, as she found herself doing, in occasional flashes, her girlish ideal in his handsome face and figure, his daring and commanding manner, his air of power, his effect of having his hand on the wheel of the earth, his brilliant and indomitable will.

Jasper came often during this period of Philip's withdrawal ; but she never proposed to him the question she had told Philip she should ask him. Something in his manner when she mentioned Philip forbade it ; and it would be unfair, she saw, to make him own up to the gallant gentleness and magnanimity he would have used in all this affair with his sensitive and high-strung brother. The use of the adjectives that both condemned and praised him brought Philip sharply before her mind, and she felt again, as if it had been at the moment, the pain that the scene between them had given her. She liked him too well to wish to hurt him, and she had felt that she was hurting him with every word she said. Perhaps he was too easily wounded ; but that seemed, now, a fault that one might forgive—nay, certainly ought to forgive to such an occasion. How hot-headed he was ! She found herself saying this with a kind of laughing fondness to herself. It seemed suddenly almost a likeable trait in him. It was his fineness—the wrong side of it, to be sure—but still his fineness. And if he was swift to anger, he was swift to feel : it was because of that. It was easy for other men to be calm : they did not care so much—perhaps did not care at all. This made her think

of Jasper ; and to think of Jasper made her lift her eyes from her typewriter, and allow her glance to rove out of doors, with an impulsive wish that it might be Philip instead of Jasper with whom she was to ride at two o'clock.

The Maurices' house stood, not far from the Vertners', on the outskirts of the town, and the sun swept an unbroken stretch of plain to look on Dorothy at her window. The glowing light and the brisk air without, gave her a longing to be galloping away into the shining day. Her eyes rested with liking on the broad, sunlit level, reaching to the mountains. If she looked straight before her she could keep the prospect untouched by the sight of a single habitation. She heaved a little sigh. She should probably never meet Philip again, let alone ride with him. The outlook from her window gave all her thoughts a pleasant turn, however, and she saw herself forgiving something to any one who should ride up into the foreground of this prospect, leading a saddle-horse.

CHAPTER VII

JASPER took up the interrupted thread of his life at the ranch with zest, in ignorance of what had happened in his absence. It gave him an agreeable thrill to resume his place : to vault into the seat of authority, once more, in putting his leg over Vixen's back. He wondered, as he went about on his horse, hearing reports and giving orders, why he ever abandoned even temporarily this little kingdom, where his word was law, and where he could see from day to day his personal foresight, shrewdness, and force, taking visible shape in the increase of his herd, in the extension of his domain, and in the growth of his influence among the cattle-men of the district. Yes, it was a mistake to spend his time in running across the Continent, while this position was his at home—a position which he would not barter for that of any one he knew, which he would not sell,—knowing

what he did of the future it promised—for any sum he was likely to be offered ; and which he would not share with any one on earth.

Ah, yes ! To be sure he had done right to go to New York. The intention he foresaw in his father to force the question of Philip's share in the range on him, before his marriage, threatened the position itself. It was not a thing he could wish to face out personally ; and if he had ever had the slightest inclination to divide his power at the ranch this would have been the last time he would have selected. Just now, when the fruits of the hard work, the sagacity, the devotion of his five years on the range began to show, was he to share results—and much worse, control over future results—with Philip ? He had borne the burden and heat of the day, he had watered and tended his little tree, had suffered and groaned and sweated to bring it to bearing ; and here came Philip loafing, in his usual way, into a soft thing that some one else had paid for, and wanting to help pick the fruit and reorganize gardening methods. Jasper had looked on with a scornful eye while Philip spread his series of idle and fatuous experiments over a wide geography. If his father was willing to pay for such cleverness in devis-

ing schemes for dodging the main point, he was n't. The main point, as he saw it, was work—hard work, guided by stiff common-sense. He was a worker himself; and he was n't taking into partnership fellows who liked fishing better than fence-building, and who, in place of his capacity for making one dollar two, knew only how to spend one and borrow two.

In Maverick, Jasper was welcomed back heartily for the most part. There were men who had been over-reached in a cattle trade by him who marred the pleasure he found in the general acclamation by avoiding him, or greeting him surlily; there was a widow whom he had been obliged to press in a little foreclosure matter, connected with a house he had bought on speculation in Maverick; and she had her circle of sympathizers. But these were trifling notes in the chorus of good-will. Just before leaving for New York, Jasper had succeeded in organizing the cattle men of the valley into a Mutual Protective Association, designed to check cattle thieving, (by which many owners had suffered heavily of late); to apply a stricter system to the round-ups; to put a stop to the loose practice of branding Mavericks wherever found, between round-ups; to join other associa-

tions in petitioning Congress for a better law to prevent the spread of the foot and mouth disease among cattle ; and especially to keep all newcomers out of the valley—the Association officially declaring the range to be overstocked.

There had been certain difficulties in forming the combination ; half a dozen forces, from different causes, were against it ; and the fact that Jasper, against all opposition, had pushed his plan to a successful conclusion had given him, in his absence, a new and stronger position in Maverick. He had always been popular ; but the town now began to feel that it owed him something. There was even talk of nominating him in the Spring for the office his father had once held ; and it was said that, if he played his cards well, he need n't stop at the Mayoralty.

At least one eye watched interestedly the subdued and decent air of triumph with which Jasper received these signs of the predominance which he might presently claim in the town. Mr. Snell's sagacious glance pursued him furtively from behind the windows of his Miners' Supply Store, as he rode by on horseback, when he came into Maverick from the ranch,—following his disappearance down the street with

a sardonic smile, and a slow, humorous working of his tongue within his cheek, which seemed to do him good.

They were all at Ira's one night when some one said that he supposed the next thing they would hear would be that Jasper had bought out his father's half interest in the ranch. He said that he had heard—he did n't know whether there was anything in it or not, of course ; but he *had* heard—that Jasper had made an almighty good thing in stocks while he was on in New York. Trust him for knowing a good thing ! He seemed to have his father's long business head with something else besides—something like clutch. Nobody ever heard of his letting go of anything that he once laid his fist over, and his father, spite of his dog-goned will, (it was a dose for an adult—that will : the speaker had tried it), had let things slip, and lost a fortune. It would be queer if Jasper *should* pull up and pass his father in the race ; now would n't it ? It would be like Deed to be glad. He was gone on those sons of his. He did n't seem to have his natural sense where they were concerned. But it would be interesting if, after his father had given him a half share in the partnership, Jasper should be able to buy the other half for himself.

“Queer partnership, that, anyway,” grunted Mr. Snell from the other side of the cloud of smoke that filled the bar-room. Snell was reputed to have made a fortune in fitting out mining parties in the early days of the Leadville boom, with a very bad grade of goods at prices not without a touch of *naïveté* for the impartial spectator, not obliged to pay them. And he had made a good thing by “grub staking” two or three young men who had been lucky in prospecting the hills about Aspen. With the coming of fortune he had put on a precise habit of speech (it was a carefully made garment, but the old would sometimes play him the low trick of showing through, in patches), and had waked up one morning with a respect for himself which required the use of the third person in referring to Mr. Snell.

“What Mr. Snell says is like this,” continued Mr. Snell : ‘A man’s all off as soon as he begins bringing family considerations into business. Mr. Snell has nothin’ against them : he’s a family man himself. But he says to his sons, he says, Look here now, Fred, if you want anything out of your old father, you have got to earn it ; and if you want to do business with him you have got to do business on business principles, every time, sir. And he does it too, gentlemen. The rate of

interest is just as high under Mr. Snell's roof and fig-tree, as it is down at his store. The multiplication table was always good enough for me ; and I guess it'll have to do for my boys," he added grimly, with an unwary lapse into the first person.

"Two per cent. a month, unquestionable security, notes protested right along. That's what does it, gentlemen. Ask no favours and take none ; and more especially have a cast-iron, copper-riveted, water-tight contract with your relatives, if you're foolish enough to have *any*, and bale the machine dry of family feeling before you start. Now Mr. Deed has got a notion in his head, near as I can make out, that there's two answers to 'twice two.' Down in town here it makes four ; but out at the ranch, when he's dealing with that son of his, Jasper, it makes five, or three, or some other fool figger."

A loyal murmur rose from the crowd at this, and Snell concluded doggedly—"Well, anyway, what Mr. Snell says is like this: 'There's a place for everything,' he says, 'and the place for family feeling is at the family fireside.'"

"Family furnace up Mr. Snell's way, ain't it, Snell ?" asked one of the group. He was joked on his peculiarity, of course, but the town did not venture far in this direction. He owned

a good share of the houses of Maverick, was a hard landlord, and employed a number of people in his business, and at his mines. Times were not always—perhaps never—of the best in Maverick ; and no one felt that he could quite afford the luxury of making an enemy of Snell.

“I’ve put in a furnace lately, sir, I admit. Yes, sir,” said he truculently. “And I may be out of my count,” he went on, with a remote implication which was not lost on men who liked their humour oblique, “but I think—I say I think, young man—I’ve got a receipt for the coal bill.”

“Come back to make things hum again out at your ranch, I judge,” Mr. Snell said to Jasper, when, about a week after the talk between Dorothy and Philip, Jasper stopped his horse in the street to speak to him. Jasper made a point of speaking all men fair, and humouring the willingness of everybody to believe his existence a constant matter for joyous surprise to all good fellows.

“Yes, Mr. Snell, yes—things get to loose ends in the master’s absence, don’t they? Personal supervision is the only plan, I find. I know it’s your plan. Not many things escape your eye.”

Mr. Snell drew his lips to a point, and, stroking them

deprecatingly, pretended to weigh the question. "Well, not a great," he consented. "I suppose, now, you rather enjoy seeing the wheels start up again," he went on in a moment, in another tone—"like to crack your whip and see things moving—eh?"

Jasper glanced at him. "Why, it's pleasant to be back," he said. "When a man really likes his business there's nothing like business after all, is there, Mr. Snell?"

"Nothing!" agreed Mr. Snell. "Nothing! Not if it *is* your business at least," he qualified, "not if you run the machine, not if you're on top."

"Well, *we* should n't care to be anywhere else, should we, Mr. Snell?" laughed Jasper easily.

Mr. Snell flashed his furtive look on him, and dropped his eyes immediately. "No," he assented, with his dry smile. It was a wrinkled smile, like the skin of last year's apple: withered and pensive and loose. It seemed to become in a moment a little large for his face, and he hastily smoothed it out. "No," he repeated, "I don't believe we should. You would n't anyway, I judge. You would n't never be caught hankering, Mr. Snell guesses, for the place of that fellow in the theatre orchestras that hits them

brasses once in a while, and dandles them sleigh-bells, and whacks his drum in between. I guess if any one *was* to do much figgerin' about your place, they'd see you belonged a leetle nigher the middle of the orchestra—somethin' not too all-fired far from the conductor's chair; and I should n't wonder if they come around to the idee that the centre of his chair was not far off the right thing. You'd want a baton in your hand, and then matters would begin to rumble around there. Eh?" he shouted in enjoyment, rubbing his hands.

Jasper laughed. He could enjoy even Mr. Snell's attribution of the naturalness of the place of command to him.

Snell went away, rubbing his hands with a glee out of proportion to the superficial dimensions of the joke; and when he was alone in his private office at the store, drew a paper endorsed "Bill of Sale of 'Triangle Outfit,'" from a bundle of documents in his safe, and seating himself in his capacious leather chair, read it over in smiling silence.

When Jasper, while still at breakfast next morning, saw Snell's leathery face come suddenly into the sunny prospect

from his window, appearing and disappearing with the motions of his horse, he was unable to imagine why he should be taking the long ride from Maverick at such an hour to see him. He had no dealings with him for nearly a year; what should he want of him? He accounted for his presence for a moment by the fantastic supposition that Snell was running out to see him for a little early morning exercise, and for the pleasure of a chat with him; and he allowed himself a smile at this idea: Snell no more took aimless exercise on horseback than the other residents of Maverick did, and if it was a question of riding five miles for the sake of a chat with him, (Jasper), he thought he saw Snell wasting good business time in that fashion. The talk of yesterday came back to him: he had thought at the time that old Snell probably wanted something with all that palavering (he called him old, though he was scarcely fifty, because, in the absence of the absolutely old in the West, middle age has to typify senility), and here he was to make what profit he could out of it. Jasper determined that it should be small. It was a bore, his coming at breakfast time. Could n't he let a man eat his meals in peace, he growled to himself.

Jasper combined with his habit of hard work certain luxurious tastes, which he did not allow to interfere with business. He rose early for work (it was one of his counts against Philip that he was never up to breakfast); but he liked a dash of Florida Water in his bath, and spent rather more than an hour in grooming himself for the day. He listened to reports about the condition of things within the immediate precinct of the ranch-house from his cowboy cook at breakfast, and gave him his orders then; but he required a dainty table from him, and did not spare the daily energy necessary to secure a luxury so foreign to every condition of the life he was leading. He dressed like his men because they would not have tolerated anything else, and because it was part of his pose of good fellow to make himself one of them; but it was one of the marvels of the Valley that he should be allowed to go so neat without losing acceptance with his cow-punchers. It was certainly not because he was obviously a man who must be neat and dainty to live, that this unworthy niceness was pardoned in him—though the most casual glance must have shown any one that—but through the respect he commanded among his men on other accounts. For a range of fifty miles about

the ranch it was understood that Jasper Deed was not the man one would choose to monkey with.

The loose hang of his dressing-gown about his stalwart figure as he sat at breakfast, concealed the physical sufficiency which was one of the sources of this feeling ; as he rose and stretched himself and went to the window to bow to Snell, with his hands thrust deep in the low pockets of the robe, it might have been guessed perhaps. He had, in fact, no such strength as Philip's ; but his closely knit frame gave him the credit to the eye of every ounce of force in him, while Philip's sturdy figure,—carried without Jasper's distinction,—had only the effect of its rude power. Jasper was one of the perfectly moulded physical products which Nature turns out in her most careful and workmanlike—perhaps not her most inspired—moods. He was built like a firmly-rooted, straight, strong young tree ; and his grace, his refinement, his physical adequacy were like that : they took the beholder with their absolute adaptability to their function, with the propriety of their place in Nature. It was this effect in him which made it seem natural that he should keep himself trim : it was by way of being a tribute of respect to so right a figure in the pageant of things.

His face had the symmetry that goes with such perfect forms. It was not very unlike certain other correct and manly faces, of course: that is the penalty one pays for having the standard face—that in degree as other faces approach the standard they must be like one's own; but even this fault was mitigated, when he spoke, by a hard line of determination which formed itself on either side his mouth, and by the glance of resolve shining from his eyes. The little frown habitually lowering his strongly marked eyebrows, and a habit of twisting the end of his heavy golden moustache, when he spoke, as if quelling things stronger than it would be useful to say, contributed to his effect of force.

Jasper turned from the window, through which Snell was visible, and threw two or three sticks of wood on the andirons. The ranch house, which was a Queen Anne cottage, built by an Eastern architect under the supervision of Deed, but much influenced in its construction by Jasper's wishes, was set directly under the range of mountains that one saw from Maverick; and the rear windows looked out upon the pine-clad lower slopes of Mount Blanco.

"Ah, Mr. Snell," he said, as he turned to greet him. "You're an early bird this morning. Take a seat. Nothing

like an early morning ride to put life into a man, is there?"

"No! No!" assented Mr. Snell absently, as he took the seat, laid his hat carefully on the floor, and fumbled in his breast-pocket for a paper.

"Well, I'm glad to see you letting up a bit on the daily grind. We all work too hard out here. A little too hasty about chasing up the almighty cartwheel; yes, a little trifle too hurried—but it rolls; does n't it, if you don't scramble after it with the rest?" Jasper put his hand to the back of his head and smoothed his carefully brushed hair. "It rolls. That's my experience.

" 'It is not wealth, nor rank, nor state,
But git up and git that makes men great.'"

Our Colorado maxim says it for us; and it's about so, I suppose. Eh, Mr. Snell?" Jasper gathered his dressing-gown about him, and seated himself luxuriously in his favourite chair before the fire, watching Snell warily from beneath his drooping lids, with every trading instinct in him alert under this rambling fire of amiability and worldly wisdom. Snell was there to get an advantage over him in

some shape: he knew that as well as if he had carried a placard about his neck to advertise him of the fact. He gathered himself together with the secure consciousness that he knew whose the advantage would be when he bowed Snell out of his door.

“Well, it tain’t quite a holiday that Mr. Snell’s taking this morning,” admitted Mr. Snell, smacking his dry lips, as a preliminary to business and observing Jasper, whose eyes were on his watch chain, with a curious look—a look instantly broadened to a smile at some subtle joke which at the lifting of Jasper’s head, he apparently saw in this. “I guess Mr. Snell has n’t taken a vacation from chasing up his own little mighty dollar, yet—not a very long one, anyhow—and he don’t seem extra likely to, while the present scarcity rules.”

“Are they scarce, Mr. Snell?” asked Jasper.

“Well, don’t you find ’em so?”

Jasper hesitated a moment. “Why, to tell the truth, no, I don’t. It takes all my time and some lively rustling to keep them plenty, of course. But I don’t mind telling you, Mr. Snell, that I have a pretty good thing here—or my father and I have. With two or three open winters, like the last two we’ve had, we sha’n’t be poor men. The

increase is enormous, you know, if you don't lose all your cattle in the winter storms : and prices have been fairly good lately. I don't believe in the policy of running down your business, and playing poor all the time. I'm not poor, myself, and I don't know that I care who knows it."

"Why, that's good ! That's good !" nodded Snell, and he let the gloating smile, which had been working about the corners of his mouth, go now, in sheer incapacity to contain his triumph longer. He longed to play his victim further, but he had to say it. "That's the kind of news that warms the cockles of an owner's heart, ain't it ? Mr. Snell don't mind owning up, if you press him, that it warms his. He's been buying some cattle himself lately."

"Indeed, Mr. Snell !" said Jasper politely. "Whose ?"

"Yours," returned Snell. He locked his withered hands within each other and leaned forward, resting his arms on his knees, and fixing his eyes on Jasper.

Jasper straightened out of his lounging attitude involuntarily. His face paled. He found his smile and cigarette instantly, and rose to pick out an alumette on the mantel, with a low laugh of self-contempt, which Snell took for derision of his statement.

“You don’t believe it,” said Snell to his back, with a gurgling note of contentment in his voice. “Well, I don’t know as I expected you to,” he drawled. “Mr. Snell said to himself when he started out to pay this little morning call that some of his remarks might require substantiation—not necessarily for publication, but as a guarantee of good faith, as the *Lone Creek Rustler* says in its ‘Notices to Correspondents.’ Well, Mr. Deed, I dare say I can substantiate. Might cast your eye over that,” he said, coiling his tongue into his cheek to keep himself in subjection, “and that,” he added, laying a second paper on the mantel, and still contriving to subdue an importunate smile.

Jasper stooped to the fire on the hearth and kindled his alumette deliberately before rejoining. He was flushed, as he rose—perhaps with stooping—but he turned and faced Snell without haste or heat.

“Who’s your employer in this game, Snell?” He rounded his lips and shaped a ring with the smoke, watching it climb to the ceiling with affectionate solicitude. “Who are you acting for, who’s your principal—which of my well-wishers put you up to this scheme?” he repeated as Snell did not answer. He looked down into Snell’s bemused face, as he

thrust his hands into the pockets of his dressing-gown, and puffed at his cigarette. "I swear, Snell, I gave you credit for more penetration than to waste your time for *any one* on a scheme that takes me for an unfledged tenderfoot. Do you think I'm here for my health?"

Snell had recovered himself, and said, with patient good humour, "No, Mr. Deed. I never thought that : your worst enemy would n't accuse you of that. There's good reading in them papers," he added with the effect of an after-thought.

"Entertain yourself with it, then," said Jasper, taking them from where they lay on the mantel, and tossing them to him. Snell caught them dexterously, without relaxing the smile which he no longer took pains to conceal, and which spread beamingly now to all his features, affecting even his sandy forelock, which had twisted itself into a curl of sympathy. "I'm not in want of reading matter, here," continued Jasper; "and if you've nothing more to say, Mr. Snell——"

"Oh, I've got plenty more to *say*, if that's all," responded Snell, imperturbably, "and you'd like this reading. Hm-hm—'This indenture—hm—this day—hm—party of the first

part, and Abraham Snell, party of the second part, witnesseth:’ would you like to know what it witnesseth?” he inquired, opening wide the document he had been pretending to take stealthy peeps at, while he read. He looked up at Jasper cunningly.

Jasper scowled back thunderously at him. “Oh, drop that leer, Snell. What are you driving at?”

“Why, I’ve got a deed here of the ‘Triangle Outfit,’—whole concern, you know,” he said, looking up into Jasper’s paling face blandly, “house, land, fences, water privileges, run of the range, and one of the largest and finest bunches of cattle in the State ; increasing enormously, I believe you said.”

“A deed of *my* range—of *my* cattle?” repeated Jasper.

“Well,” drawled Snell, with his habitual deprecating pull at his puckered lips, “not too all-firedly, tee-totally yours. Some of it your father’s, ain’t it?—say about two-thirds. I guess it’s a good deed. Ought to be—deed from a Deed, you know.” He leered up into Jasper’s miserable face, with a smile of enjoyment.

“From my father ! Stuff !”

“Do you know his writing?” Snell began to open out

the paper. Jasper snatched it from him. At sight of the signature he burst out in a great imprecation. He turned livid, and Snell got hastily on his feet, fearing that he would fall. But he left the fireplace quickly, and going over to the window read the whole document slowly through.

"What devil's cunning did you use with my father to get him to sign this?" he asked, turning on Snell, as he finished.

"Not any," responded Snell cheerily. "I guess you used that for me, Mr. Deed, if all your father said was true. I'd have worked tooth and nail for a year to 'a got that deed signed, just as it is there, I don't mind telling *you*, Mr. Deed, and been glad of the chance. But your father saved me the trouble. He came and offered me the bargain, he urged it on me, he crammed it down my throat; and after beating him down a trifle, just for self-respect, you know, I yielded politely. He was rather in a hurry, and I didn't want to bother him with a refusal—not at that price," he qualified, stroking his chin. "Ranges like this ain't going at \$25,000—well, not every day." He glanced at Jasper, and his eye dropped irresistibly, in a wink. "It tain't no bad bargain," he went on, with a lapse into the cruder forms of his speech. "I don't mind ownin' up to that, now it's

signed and sealed, and the outfit's mine." Snell did not miss the wince and the clench of the teeth with which Jasper received this. "But it was n't the *bargain* I was after—not entirely." Jasper stared at him. "I suppose you've forgotten that little transaction of ours a year ago come next Spring, Mr. Deed? Yes: I thought you would have. Well, you see I *ain't*. That's the difference. Oh, Mr. Snell's got a memory for kind deeds. 'Kind deeds can never, never die,' the old song says. We used to sing it in our Sunday School back in the New Hampshire days. Don't know that sacred toon, perhaps? But it's a good toon, all the same—a good, old-fashioned truth-telling toon. They can't die—kind deeds—and if they could, I would n't let 'em. But I ain't had no trouble keepin' this one alive; it's got up with me every morning, and made my breakfast happy for me, and it's gone to bed with me every night and helped me to put in a good night's rest. I ain't forgot, Mr. J. Deed, if you have," he said, rising, and nodding his head bitterly toward him, "and I've paid out a tidy sum for this here little dokkymment,"—snatching it from Jasper's loose clasp, and shaking it in his bony claws,—“just to get it to help say so for me. I hope the language is plain, Mr. Deed.”

Jasper kept his hands from Snell's collar with difficulty. "Quite, Mr. Snell," he said, with his usual coolness. "You've paid \$25,000 for a piece of paper that is worth, at the outside, twenty-five cents. That makes the expense of registering your disapproval of something I've done, or left undone—I really don't recall the particular villainy you allude to—twenty-four thousand, nine hundred and ninety-nine dollars, and seventy-five cents. It's not a bad bargain as Mr. Snell's bargains go,"

"What!" screamed Snell.

"I say your deed, as you call it, is n't worth the paper it's written on."

"Oh, it tain't, ain't it?" sneered Snell comfortably.

"No. My father had no more right to make that sale than you would have had."

Snell laughed cheerfully. "Think you're the only man who ain't here as a sanitary measure, do you? I took a lawyer's advice before I closed with that poor father of yours that ain't got no rights. *I'm* not here for my health—not altogether. When will you be ready to gim'me possession?"

"Never," returned Jasper, closing his lips.

"Oh, come ! I'm willing to accommodate ; but the date's too late. Make it a day or two earlier—say to-morrow !"
He flirted the deed carelessly about in his hand.

"I'll tell you something I *won't* postpone," said Jasper, his fingers working by his side.

"Yes?" inquired Snell with the irritating rising inflection.

"And that's putting *you* out of the house." He began to roll up his sleeve.

"Inhospitable, ain't you?" said Snell, taking up his hat nonchalantly. "That ain't the way I'll treat you when I'm master here. Judge I'd better bring the sheriff with me when I come to take possession to-morrow," he said tentatively at the door.

Jasper glared at him. He shut the door hastily. When he had gone Jasper ran to his room, cast off his dressing-gown, and drew on his riding boots. Vixen was ready for him when he came down the stairs, and flung himself upon her. He dug his spurs into her. Snell was making his way back to Maverick by another road.

CHAPTER VIII

JASPER pushed Vixen across the five miles of level plain lying between the ranch and the mountains on the other side of the valley, with quirt and spur. It was an incomparable morning ; but nothing in his mood answered to it. The stirring, potent, heady morning air swam richly through his blood, awakening him to a hotter anger, and a deeper resolve. He drank its strength as he rode on. It made him strong for what he had to do. He set his teeth and spurred forward, hammering his horse's flanks. The noises of the day's work were only beginning in the ranch houses he passed on the road. The spacious, deep-lunged, awful quiet that settles at night over the big hills and the stupendous prairie reaches of the West had not lifted, and the mountains, black and still in the motionless pines at their

fect, and white and still about their snowy heads, looked down on the silence gravely.

Jasper was not thinking of mountains. His imagination, active enough within its own range of themes, was busy with a man who, up in the hills before him, would be just rising. The hills were not near enough. He cried upon the horse with an oath, as if Vixen could reduce the distance visibly at the leap she gave under a cut from his quirt.

At the "Snow Find" shaft a workman was busy lowering the bucket. Jasper tethered his horse at the cabin door and strode over to him. "Pull up that bucket, will you? I want to see my brother."

Mike Dougherty stared at him, and went on lowering. "Pull it up, do you hear?" said Jasper, laying his hand roughly on the man's shoulder.

"Yis. I hear," returned the man. With his arm he followed the revolving crank stolidly. The rope unwound.

"You'll mind, if you know what's good for yourself."

"Yis, I'll moind me owners. I takes me orders from Mither Cutter and Mither Dade, d'yez moind?"

"I *am* Mr. Deed—Mr. Deed's brother."

Mike shot a look at him as he stooped to his work. He

may have found warrant for the statement in the resemblance Jasper bore to Philip. "An' how would I know that?" he said, reversing the crank, and fetching up the bucket, hand over hand, with the same deliberation. Jasper cursed him silently. "There yez are. Yez'll find Mither Dade in the big drift to yer right at the bottom." Jasper got into the cage, and Dougherty lowered away. "The second to the right, d'yez moind?"

Jasper had thought out his meeting with Philip as he rode. He had decided, if he did not find him at his cabin, to go down into the mine without asking for him. He preferred not to give him the opportunity of refusing to see him.

He dropped past a stretch of pale green earth out of the light. After the mellow stratum of brown he was in the dark, and all colours were alike. The firmament shrank above his head to a narrowing circle, the size of a man's palm. When he looked over the sides of his swinging, sinking bucket, the darkness deepened thickly into the abyss. He told himself that he was a fool to so put himself in Philip's power. But he could not stop now, and at the moment a pin head of yellow flame danced in the depths, and he shouted at it.

The man behind it caught the bucket as it settled on the floor of the mine, lifting his candle to peer into the visitor's face. All the morning shift was in the mine; and both the Superintendents. Any one who came now was a stranger, and, in a productive mine, a stranger is likely to be held an enemy until he proves himself a friend.

"Well?" interrogated the figure in shadow behind the candle.

"Is Mr. Deed here?" asked Jasper, stepping out.

"Yes; but he don't allow no one in this here mine," returned Henry Wilson, formerly of Missouri.

"He'll allow me. I'm his brother. I settled that at the top." As the man still scrutinized him, without offering to move, he said, "You don't think I lowered *myself* down in the bucket, do you?"

"I don't know what you did," growled the figure, which now showed a face, as the candle was lowered to the level of the head.

"Well, I do, then. I satisfied the man on duty at the top before getting down. You can lay odds on that."

"Yes," assented the man. The candle showed a smile in the recesses of his tawny beard. "I guess you would n't

be let by Mike very slick without you halted and gave the countersign. Who did you say?"

"I sha'n't say it again. Come! Get a move on!"

The man surveyed him again surlily, and turning suddenly away with his candle, left him in darkness. Jasper lighted a cigar and sat down on the edge of the bucket. The man's stumping step died away in the lateral gallery into which he had turned.

Two minutes passed without a sound. The air of the mine laid a clammy hand on him. He puffed vigorously at his cigar. The silence in the black space not lighted by the fitful glow of his cigar was like a thing in the darkness. Then he heard a quick step coming along the same gallery, a candle wavered into sight down the long passage into which he sat looking, and Philip stood above him. They gazed into each other's eyes.

"*You!*" cried Philip.

Jasper lifted his eyes lazily to the candle Philip held aloft, and merely smiled. "Yes." He bit at the end of his cigar. "I want father's address."

"I can't give it to you."

"You mean you won't."

"I said '*can't*,'" returned Philip, thrusting the steel point of his candle-holder into a soft space in the wall, and advancing on his brother with bent brows. "I don't know where my father is ; and let me tell you that you will do well to measure your words." He looked steadily into his eyes, across the candle glare. "This interview is not of my seeking."

"Hum," uttered Jasper meditatively. "Your manners have rather gone off since I met you last. The life of a mining camp seems to have been—relaxing."

Philip bit his lip. "You should not be the first to say so," he said.

Jasper laughed. "You have n't looked me up with your report of my mine," he said, with impudent perception of Philip's meaning. "No, I understand ; it was n't ready," he continued, lifting his hand deprecatingly at Philip's motion to reply. "I quite understand the delay : there was something else that was n't ready. *You* were n't ready." A dangerous light kindled in Philip's eyes. "A man who has done a sneaking thing behind another man's back usually *is n't* ready, I've noticed, to face the man he's injured."

Philip's hands twitched at his sides. "Ingrate!" he cried. "Keep those words to tickle yourself with!"

Jasper looked at him quietly from between his half-closed lids. "I'm talking of *you*!" he said. "Bluff is a good dog for tricks; but I'm dealing with facts; and I say that to rig a game on me with father in my absence was a dirty act. You can turn it back or front, or upside down," he went on with mounting anger, "but you can't get around that. It was a dirty act, and calling me names won't whitewash it." He came close to Philip, casting the words in his teeth.

The creak of an ore car on a distant track cut upon the silence that fell for the instant, while Philip searched for words. The preposterous reversal of their positions dizzied him. For a second everything went round in a whirl, in the midst of which Jasper's adroit shifting of the question between them seemed to take on a demoniac physical body, and to go capering through the candle flame, jibing at him. The right which he felt at the centre of Jasper's accusation quelled him, and beat back one after another the answering words thronging to his lips. He clenched his fist and dropped it at his side. Everything in him

called upon him to choke back the falsehood in his throat as it touched *him*; but as his words touched his father, he owned sickly to himself their truth. The thought dashed him, and Jasper took the word before he could choose between one of the half-hearted answers that lay upon his tongue.

“You thought I would n’t see through this thing—you and father—did you? You must have taken me for a bat. Why, you’d see through it yourself—yes, even you, my helpless, pottering brother, who don’t know as much of business in a year as I could guess before breakfast any morning! Yes, you who never turned an honest dollar in all your life, and who have managed to lose a pretty number; even you would see through it! The thing’s childish, I tell you—hiring Snell to make a show of buying the range, and fixing things to take it over on your own account and father’s as soon as you’ve quieted me. There were just two leaks in that chivalric scheme, let me tell you: First, the idea that I would n’t see the point of all this roundabout trick for doing me out of my range; and second, that I *would* be quieted. I do see the point, and I won’t be quieted. There’s going to be a row about this thing

before we're done with it, let me tell you! I should n't wonder if you heard the echo of it as far as the 'Snow Find,' " he sneered. "I'm just the sort of man to sit down and whistle at my fate, I am! Huh!" he grunted, for lack of all other expressions of his scorn, and turned away.

"Do you find yourself safe in *always* judging other men by yourself?" asked Philip, after a pause.

Jasper stumbled, and Philip caught up his halting words. "You think you know me. You have said how I am this and that. Answer me! Am I the man to meet your vile blow with a viler? Have I ever played the black-guard with you since you've known me? You must wish to have an accusation on your side. The circumstances make it desirable. It should be a big one too, since it has to shelter you, and stand for answer to an act you know of. But it should be credible. Come! Spin a yarn you can believe yourself! Make yourself believe that I could stoop to your low-lived notions of what a man may do, and trim my actions by yours. Bah! Was I ever a sneak?"

Jasper clenched his hands. "Yes!" he cried hoarsely. "Yes! When were you ever anything else? Your life

has been one long slinking out of every sort of duty, responsibility and hard work. Your father has fed you since you were a man : he has kept you in amusement, and helped you in every fool scheme for dodging disagreeable things that your ingenuity could invent. You've gone on horse-back, from the first, young man ! Do you think I have n't seen it ? Do you suppose I have n't watched you, while I was putting my back into my own work, and sweating to pull up this ranch you talk about ?" Philip had not mentioned it. "*Sneak*, do you say ? Why, if you were mousing about for a type of all the sneakingest things a man can do, you would n't have to go far. Fancy your demand that I should give up a share in this range to *you*, after what I've done for it ? You always had an eye for a soft snap ; but I swear you never had the courage before to put in a claim for such a soft snap as that."

" Oh," cried Philip, "you should add that. You do well ! Your hellish ingratitude would lack its final touch if you left me to go free of your crime ! It is I who have dealt my father this coward's blow. It is *my* act that tortured and maddened him and sent him to fling away his fortune distractedly, that he might stab me back with the loss of my

share in it! It is like you to be the innocent one, and mighty like me, is it not, to be in the wrong? Was I ever anything else? And it's I, too,—it must be I, for if it's not I, it must be you, and that's not possible—who begged his brother to stake out a claim for him in the mountains, and then got him without much bother (for you were always an easy going fool about taking trouble for others, were n't you, Jasper?) to work the claim for him, alongside his own. Ah, yes!" he cried, with a derisive shout that went echoing under the hewn roof above his head, and ran stormily among the galleries, "it would be I, would it not, who took such a service from my brother, who left him to slave for a year for me in an ungodly hole among the hills, and paid him at the end with a coward's trick of fence that has its name among gentlemen. Yes, it would be I! And it is you, basely wounded and heaped over with injury,—it is you who come out of this thing with white hands! It's a fine saying—a monstrous fine saying . . . *brother!*"

Jasper slashed away with his cow-puncher's knife at a strip of iron pyrites in the rock at his side, as Philip went on. At the last word he twisted the knife violently and brought away the glistening little stratum at which he had

been quarrying. It dropped to the floor of the mine with a tiny note that was like a crash in the silence which fell as Philip ceased. Jasper paled to the eyes.

"Words!" he said, in his throat. "Words! Better stick to them. Keep away from facts! They hurt. Where is my father?"

"I have told you that I do not know," returned Philip in the tone of enforced patience which one uses toward a guest who has outstayed his welcome. He folded his arms.

"And I think I've said I don't believe you," answered Jasper. "If you hope to force me to a quarrel with *you*, by keeping me from the bigger game, let me tell you that you are badly off your base. I've got a juicy bone to pick with you, later; you've given me matter enough this morning for all the quarrel you'll ever have any real need for, I fancy. But I choose my time for quarrels. This is n't my time for a quarrel with you. I'm not gunning for assistant sneaks to-day. I'm looking for the brains of this deviltry. Tell me where my father is, and when I've made him disgorge, I'll be ready to give you all the attention you can want."

Philip fixed his eyes steadily on him, above the candle. It began to gutter, and flared between the brothers.

“Damn you!” he said deliberately, from within his teeth. “Keep your foul tongue from your father, or by heaven, I’ll teach you courtesy!”

“T-s-s-s!” uttered Jasper. “An interesting person to teach courtesy! Tell me,” he cried, taking a stride forward (and in the baleful light that suddenly entered his eyes, Philip guessed, as by a fatal inspiration, what he must say); “tell me,” he repeated, “what did you say of me to Miss Maurice when I left you alone with her not many days ago? What pleasant tales about me did you entertain her with? Ah, my knightly brother! You were asking if you were ever a sneak since I’ve known you. To abuse me to a woman in my absence with the mean hope of undermining my favour with her, and slinking into my place! There’s chivalry for you! The chivalry of a confidence-man! The courtesy of a back alley!”

With a single movement Philip whipped past the candle, and took him by the throat. “You hound!” he cried. “Breathe Miss Maurice’s name again, and I’ll. . . . You never had a decent thought! You are as incapable of under-

standing the movements of a gentleman's mind as if you had sprung from the gutter! Who taught you such thoughts? Not your father, damn you!"

"Take off your hands! Take your hands off, I say," shouted Jasper.

"Must I be a cad because we are sons of one father—more shame? Must I use my position to slander you to a woman because you would have done as much in my place? How *should* you guess that your father could wipe out your share in that cursed ranch in the pure generosity of his anger? It needs a *man* to understand certain things!" Philip's voice was a sob. "You think it like him to turn a penny from his revenge, do you? You can't understand his unreckoning love turned to unreckoning hate; you can't understand his ruining himself to even things with you, eh? Cur! Do you suppose he knows *how* to do a thing you could understand?"

Jasper cast himself free, and fell upon his brother in blind rage. They clenched in silence and swayed in each other's arms.

"Curse you!" muttered Jasper, as Philip forced him to his knees. He caught fiercely at him, and, rising suddenly,

by sheer strength, ground Philip back inch by inch, and, with an adroit twist, had all but thrown him. But Philip, winning a fresh grip, cast him back against the wall, where the candle leaped in a dying flame. Jasper's head struck upon a point of rock. He fell heavily to the floor. They had gone crashing into the candle together. It lay upon the floor, extinguished.

In the darkness Philip stooped in horror, and thrust his hand under his brother's clothing, feeling for the beating of his heart.

CHAPTER IX

THE minutes lengthened as he crouched there in the stillness, dazed and shuddering. In the silence he heard the dull, regular stroke of a sledge upon a drill in the recesses of the mine. His eyes seemed bursting in the darkness as he strained them upon the still figure beneath his hands. The blackness began to pale. The daylight, streaming through the shaft, reasserted itself vaguely, and, with his eyes, Philip devoured the motionless form. Its outlines slowly discovered themselves in the sick uncertainty of the yellowing light.

Steps drew near in one of the lateral galleries, and the gleam of a candle suddenly floated over the white face. Cutter laid a hand upon Philip's shoulder, and he looked up, turning a drawn visage on him.

Cutter raised his candle, peering upon the prostrate figure ; and as Philip gave way to him, bent above it, and, after a moment's study, gave Philip his candle to hold and put his ear to Jasper's heart.

"Pshaw ! He's all right !" cried Cutter, in a cheerful tone which shook Philip out of his labouring nightmare. "Come ! let's have him in the bucket."

Philip stooped without a word, and they carried him to the bucket, and stepping in, gave the signal. As they rose, with their freight between them, Cutter caught out his handkerchief at sight of the wound on the head from which the blood still flowed, and bound it up.

They laid him on the grass in the wide sunshine, at the top. Philip fetched water and they dashed it in his face. They loosened his collar, and plied him with brandy. He stirred.

Philip, who had been bending over him, sprang up. "Here, take this !" he muttered hurriedly, pressing the flask into Cutter's hands. Mike came up with a telegram which had come from Gasher's—the small railway station, a mile from the "Snow Find." Philip tore it open, and with a glance at it handed it over to Cutter.

“PIÑON, *Dec. 22.*

“The Ryan outfit have made a strike in the ‘Little Cipher.’ Assays \$1,200 to the ton. You are a rich man. Come at once to protect your interests.

“HAFFERTON.”

“By *Jove!*” shouted Cutter as he read. “Did n’t I tell you!” He rose in excitement. Jasper moaned uneasily.

“No,” said Philip.

“Well, I told you the other thing. It’s all the same.”

“You told me that the ‘Pay Ore’ was a great mine, and that the ‘Little Cipher’ was no good,” returned Philip. His voice had a hollow sound.

Cutter looked at him. “Well?” exclaimed he impatiently. And after a pause, “See here! Will you take my advice?” he asked, laying a compelling hand on Philip’s listless arm.

“I don’t know,” returned Philip, out of the mazy seizure into which the despatch seemed to have plunged him.

“You don’t want to see this fellow when he comes to. And you ought to be at Piñon by the first train that will take you there. Take his horse over by the cabin, and

catch the 11.12. It's only twenty-five minutes past ten now, and you can make it on that horse of his with hard riding. I'll send Mike after you to fetch back the horse, so that it will be at the ranch when we get there."

"When you get there?" repeated Philip.

"Yes; yes! Don't make objections, but start. The Ryans will have time to play the deuce with you if you don't start at once. I'll get Wilson to help me make up a bed for him in the Studebaker wagon, and I'll drive him over to the Triangle myself. I'll see him through. Don't bother! And get on that horse!"

"Cutter!" said Philip, in a tone of conviction, "you are a brick!"

He gave him his hand in a silent pressure, strode over to Vixen, flung himself on her back, and with a wave of his hand to Cutter, disappeared below the brow of the hill on which the "Snow Find" buildings stood.

Jasper opened his eyes.

PHILIP saw the meeting hills, within which Maverick lay, part before the climbing progress of his train, and then close

in behind it again, as they issued from the valley. The train writhed upon itself, crossing and recrossing its track, snatching an advantage where it could, and winning its way from height to height by breathless climbs, by level tugs, in which the engine seemed to fill its lungs, by stealthy curves, by assaults. They stood at last, where a mountain side dropped sheer away, below the rails, and, looking out from the dizzily clambering train, Philip saw beneath a white world, out of which the melancholy firs lifted their wailing arms in scattered companies. Ouray impended spectrally above the opposite window for a moment ; and then the train was at rest upon the summit, within the black hole which snow closes at all seasons. The scene was the same to Philip's heated sight within the tunnel and without : the monstrous bulks of the interfolded hills, the vision of a white, tumultuous wilderness, desolately broken by rocks and pines, ran upon his distracted sense like frost tracery, dissolving unintelligibly as it shaped itself.

He was facing a new fact, with a thousand consequences, and watched the marching panorama as one watches a play in an unfamiliar tongue. He had only known his fact an

hour ; but a year's pain had gone into it, and a year's idle wrestling.

The mine in which the Ryan outfit had struck a fortune was Jasper's.

As the train pulled out of the tunnel, and slipped down the first stretch of the descent on the other side of the mountains, Philip dreamed in rage of the day in which Jasper should take over with a silent smile the fortune he had won for him. It was the twist too much in this devilish business, he cried to himself, in speechless bitterness, as he stared from the window again. The train swept into a snowshed or burst out of one momentarily, and he took the white and glistening sweep of the wilderness upon his unseeing eyes in abrupt flashes. In the snowsheds where the other passengers could not see, he beat the arm of his seat in wrath.

He could bear that Jasper should give him no thanks for the year he had divided between the two mines ; he could bear that he should cheat him of his inheritance, and, in the helpless tangle of fate in which that act had involved his father and himself, and even Margaret, he could bear to owe to Jasper the loss of his father's trust. He could suffer this

and not attempt reprisal ; he could even feel how deeply, fatally wrong all reprisal must be. But he could not heap a fortune on the man from whom he had borne all this.

He frowned on McCormick, as he threw his leg over the pony he hired from him at Bayles' Park, for the ride over the Pass.

"Been gittin' bad news?" asked the hotel proprietor. He had got the best of him in the bargain for the pony, and could afford to be sympathetic.

"Heard of the strike up at Piñon?" asked Philip with an idle willingness to amuse his misery by what the man should say.

"Don't mean the 'Little Cipher?'" You ain't got nah-thin' to do 'th that, have you?"

"I leased it to the Ryan outfit a couple of months ago."

"Why, shake!" cried the hotel man with honest pleasure. "You don't tell me! They tell *me* it's a Josephus dandy. Moshier come down the other day on his way to Leadville—you know Moshier—and he said it was the biggest strike they've made at Piñon: the hull town's wild about it."

Philip conquered the envious pang for which he began to despise himself.

"How long ago did Moshier say they made the strike?" he asked, to stifle his thoughts.

"'Bout a week. Have you jist heard about it?" asked the man interestedly.

"Yes. They were n't in a hurry to let me know."

"No—nachully," mused his interlocutor. "Did they tell you what it assayed? I heard \$1,500."

Philip found a smile. "The assayists get a little rattled when somebody really strikes something, I've noticed. Trying to find pay ore in iron pyrites three hundred and sixty-four days in the year dulls a man."

"Well, you take it easy," said McCormick admiringly. He had spent a good part of his life on an Illinois farm where things do not happen so often as they do in Colorado. "If any one was to have asked me before you spoke up about the 'Little CIPHER' bein' yours"—Philip winced—"I should have said you had been losin' a near relation 'stid of strikin' it rich in a mine—somethin' a little nearer 'n an uncle, and a little further than a father—'bout a brother, say." McCormick laughed for enjoyment of his humour,

but he changed the subject at Philip's scowl. "Say, what become of the pretty young lady and her father that you come through with a while ago, after the big storm?" And at Philip's answer, "That's good," he said. "Glad to hear it. She was lookin' shaky. I was a little mite afraid she would n't pull through. It was a close call you had up 'round the Fifth Cascade, there. We ain't had such a storm since. Well, better luck this time! We can't afford to lose you, you know. You'll be one of our millionaires, now. Come in and have something before you start!" he urged, in the overflow of his hospitality.

Philip said it was too cold to get off his horse again, and offered him a nip from his flask, if he must pledge him. They drank together, McCormick praising the quality of Philip's whisky. "One more? Well I don't mind! Here's to the success of the 'Little CIPHER' and its owner."

"No," said Philip. He laid a hand on McCormick's uplifted arm. "There are better toasts than that, McCormick. Drink to the poor devils who have n't struck it rich!"

"Oh, all right," returned McCormick, surprised. "To the poor devils who have n't struck it rich, then! That takes in me," he added, as he smacked his lips.

Philip rode away and over the Pass with set teeth. Jasper would be even richer than he had fancied—brutally, damnably rich! It was the chance of mining: Jasper had won, and he had lost, and it was the kind of chance for which he could see himself being almost glad, under certain conditions; he could not imagine himself grudging a brother a fortune, if that were all. Very likely he could do more with a fortune than he could: he had never learned how to use money, or even how to keep it; and at least there would be something to say for the wisdom of the Fate which should pick out Jasper rather than him for her money favours. But after all that had passed, to choose him as the instrument of her bounty, was an odious freak. Contrived in this way, he did grudge the fortune to his brother—and grudged it to him savagely. He felt like howling in his rage to the cañon walls, as he thought that it was for this he had spent that cursed year at Piñon. He thought of their fight in the mine. He thought of what he had said to him, and now took none of it back, as he had begun to take it back when he stooped over him in the awful fear of what he had done. On the whole he was glad that he had not known then what he knew now: no one could say to what he might have been tempted.

The thing was too intolerable: to suffer the ignominy of Jasper's swindle, to lose his future, to lose his father through him, and to answer it all with a gift! So did fools! So did the whining cowards who saw their account in it! So did the sort of men whom every fibre in Philip's nature went out in contempt for. He pulled himself up with the irrelevant thought that so did Christians. "And if any man smite thee upon thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." One knew what to think of that in these days. But of course it was not meant for these days. The habit of intellectual pity for those who took injunctions of this kind literally and sought to make the impossible application of them to the conditions of every-day life, rose to wash the whimsical thought from its momentary lodgement. And yet, why not? There was a thought there.

There was no snow in front of the cave near the Fifth Cascade when he reached it, though a heavy fall lay upon the hills toward which his face was set. The thought of Dorothy and of the days they had spent in the cave—days in which the friendly meeting of a common danger, and the natural, candid, almost happy conditions of their situation had drawn them together—taught him a new pang. His

heart laboured thickly with the sudden pain of the thought that she was lost to him. If he could still hope to restore himself to his place in her thought—when he recalled how he had lost it through a sentiment of delicacy about Jasper, he loathed himself—what sort of man was he now to propose marriage to any woman?

He said to himself, with a smile of irony, that he was in just the condition to tempt a woman to marriage whom he had given reason to distrust and dislike him; and, especially, he was in a state which commends itself, everywhere, to the careful fathers of lovely girls, and would be certain to commend itself to her money-loving father.

Not to put too fine a point upon it, he was a beggar; and a beggar, now, without hope. He saw, now, how he had built upon the expectation that the Ryan outfit would strike it rich in the "Pay Ore"; he went back and told himself that he should never have gone on seeing so much of Miss Maurice if he had not made sure of this in his own musings upon his future. His visible resources during the time when he was seeing Miss Maurice every day, and for a good part of every day, were contained in a leather trunk, the worse for mountain travel on pack animals. But he

had been rich in confidence. He smiled wearily as he remembered that he was always rich in that; if at any moment of his life he could have realized the wealth that he saw in "futures" he would seldom have needed to wonder where he could borrow money to lend good fellows, or to buy a useless third pony. It was an instinct with Philip to want the third pony; and an irresistible instinct to buy it when he lacked money for a new hat. In moments like those he was enduring as he rode forward over the Pass toward Piñon, he recognized these instincts for follies at least as cordially as his wisest friend could have wished; he even said to himself that it was cold-blooded to have borrowed that last money from Vertner for the purchase of Dan; but he excused himself by recalling that he had expected the "Pay Ore" to do something for him then: it only needed to be sunk deep enough, he remembered having repeated to himself, when he was turning over in his mind the idea of asking Vertner for the loan. But Dan was a good horse and worth the money; and, anyway, he felt himself absolved by Vertner's own shrewdness. Even with his talent for friendliness, Vertner would hardly have lent him that amount just then if he had n't believed in the "Pay

Ore." Surely it was n't in the "Little Cipher" that he was putting his trust?

And at this he said to himself for the hundredth time, that if any one liked that kind of humour, it was a pretty stroke on the part of fortune, to have wheedled him and every one who knew the situation existing at Piñon, into the belief that she would one day give him a rich mine for his portion; and to keep her word in the fashion she had chosen. She had struck it rich for him as she had engaged, but she had struck it rich in Jasper's mine.

"That keep the word of promise to our ear,
And break it to our hope,"

he muttered to himself. Was it not even in his mine, that she had uncovered the ore-bearing vein, if you would, according to the letter of her agreement—his mine in trust: his mine for Jasper!

The thought was too bitter. He turned from it to wonder sarcastically if Jasper's luck would hold in the search he knew he would be making for his father, as soon as he was able to be about again. It would be like the way things had been going since his father had struck back at Jasper, if

he should find him, and revenge himself as Jasper would know how to revenge himself. Ah, that was the mistake ! It was useless to regret it now ; the thing was done. But what, of all that had happened since, was not the fruit of it ? It would have been a wise or a very hardy man who had ventured to foretell what shape the sure train of evil must take, when his father answered Jasper's blow with another ; but a child could have foreseen the inevitableness of the pursuing chastisement—of all this horrid, fertile coil of wrong begotten of wrong. Subtle, ingenious, pitiless—by what sureness of indirection, by what deadly certainty of straightforward vengeance, the Law which his father had outraged was taking its satisfaction ! Was it only nightmare ? Did it not truly seem that the wrong which his father had dared try to cure with wrong must go on helplessly begetting other wrong, after its kind, and in its own image ? Philip felt as if he were getting his Bible mixed ; but Nature seemed to have her own idea of the eye for an eye doctrine : that was what he was thinking. She did n't spare.

His thought ricocheted, in the aimless manner of thoughts, toward the ever-recurring theme of his debts. With his horse's head turned toward Piñon they became a

subject of immediate, of even pressing importance. What was he to say to those fellows? He had staved off men to whom he owed money before ; but he had never made so many promises about any other set of debts, nor broken so many. The letters he had received lately from Piñon had made him writhe ; for it is a curious truth that reminders of debts contracted in carelessness about the means of meeting them, are often felt to be more insulting than reminders of the same nature conveyed to conscious innocence, whose cheque-book is in its pocket. Philip hated the men to whom he owed money. They represented the difficulty of life. Worse—they stood for his weakness : they *were* his weakness in material form. From this point of view their mere existence was insulting.

He chose to hold in his pony after passing Laughing Valley City. There was snow at this height, and he did not wish to press the animal. Besides, a plan of getting into Piñon after dark and up to his old cabin on Mineral Hill,—a plan of investigating the find at the “Little Cipher,” leaving Hafferton in charge, if he was still there, and getting away again before the shopkeepers in the town below should have the opportunity of representing

disagreeable facts to him, had been forming itself in his mind.

In the event Hafferton hailed him from the sidewalk as he rode into the town, and Philip had to alight and walk along with him, while he heard Hafferton's story. It was an interesting story; and they were at Hafferton's cabin, and Philip had consented to stay the night with him, and allowed his horse to be stabled in the burro shed, behind the hut, before he knew. A party of four were playing cards in the cabin which Hafferton had shared with the editor of his old paper since he had returned to Piñon (his leased mine at Leadville had ceased to pay lately): and in the doubtful light cast by two candles, set in a couple of whisky bottles, Philip saw at once that one of the party was Charlie White—red-haired Charlie White, the newsdealer, whose bill he knew by heart.

"How are you, Mordaunt?" he said, giving a listless hand to the editor, who rose with his cards, and wrung his hand.

"Lucky dog!" said Mordaunt, in a hearty half-whisper, which Philip felt was intended for congratulation. He half withdrew the hand which Mordaunt was crushing; and then

let it lie. They all rose from the table and crowded about him, eager to snatch his hand. "Oh, come!" cried Philip, as his bones crunched upon each other in the grasp of a hairy paw, "I can't interrupt the game."

"Game be blowed!" replied the owner of the paw cheerily. "What's the latest from the 'Little Cipher'?" That's a daisy strike of yours, Deed!"

They liked the coolness with which Philip took his good-fortune. When they heard that he had n't seen his mine yet, they formed themselves into a committee on the spot, to escort him to it in the morning.

"Better hire the 'Silas R. Phinney' brass band," said Philip, sickly laying hold of the humorous view of the situation; and staying himself upon it, as the only permanent object in this lurching welter, while he went on to chaff them.

None of them knew. But, of course! Had he not known that no one knew? Yes, yes! Oh, no doubt! But he had not fancied them ignorant in this way. He had expected. . . Heaven knew what he had expected! Or, yes—he remembered what he must have expected. He had understood vaguely that at Piñon they could not know the mine to be

Jasper's—how should they? They had never heard of Jasper. It was all in his own name: both mines had been known in Piñon as equally his: “Deed’s mines;”—Philip Deed’s mines. Yes; he had said this to himself; but never the other thing: that they must think the “Little Cipher” *his*. Was it too obvious, he wondered, now? Had he been crazed by Jasper’s damnable good fortune? Well, what matter! They thought the mine his.

A black suggestion—the devil’s—plucked at him as he stood among these fellows, giving back their congratulations with dazed looks and half-hearted raillery. It came upon him suddenly, fatally, as if this, too, were a fresh thought. The thought was that Jasper knew no more than they. He knew that he owned a mine at Piñon. But which?

Philip turned pale, and tried to cry the truth at them. It would not utter itself. Then some one proposed a toast to the owner of the “Little Cipher,” and when at last he lifted his voice to explain their mistake at any cost, it was drowned in the uproarious shout of congratulation.

But Philip was determined, now. He waited until he could catch Charlie White away from the crowd; and drawing him into a corner said, “That bill I owe you——”

“Oh, that’s all right, man! You did n’t think I was anyways worried about that, did you?” asked White jovially.

“Yes. You have n’t left me at a loss to understand that you were worried.”

“Oh, my letters!” cried Charlie, waving them off magnificently. “You surely have n’t been taking them seriously! What? My little joking way! Why, I thought you were too much of a joker yourself not to understand a bit of fun, like that, Mr. Deed!”

“It is n’t my idea of fun, Mr. White,” retorted Philip, reckless of consequences with a man whom he might have to sue for indulgence the next minute. “I can’t meet your bill in cash at the moment,” he went on haughtily. “But if you will allow me to return the set of Thackeray, and some of the other books in good bindings—it’s coming Christmas, and you’ll have a sale for them—I can make a small payment, on account, on the magazines and other things I owe you for.”

They spoke in an undertone; but Philip felt that they were watched by the others, who went on drinking, leaving the new-made Mining King to his royal whim.

"Why, what the——?" began White; and Philip saw that he had humiliated himself for nothing. Then, as if taken with discretion, White went on—"Why, pshaw, man! What's the use of talking! Charlie White ain't the last man to understand how a fellow can be hard up with a leased mine where they've only just struck the dust. I don't want neither books, nor payment. Not I! Why, you must come down in the morning, after you've been up to your mine, and see what you want in our line. We won't stand on the question of credit. Five years and no questions asked is my motto with Mr. Deed."

If he could have drawn a cheque for \$69.17 then and there and handed it over to him, Philip would have answered this as he was aware that it ought to be answered. The consciousness that he had less than \$15 in cash in the world; and less than \$10 in his trousers' pockets, taught him to parley with the situation, as it had often taught him to parley with situations less vital. A wandering recollection came to him of something he had been hoping to be able to send Dorothy for Christmas—something which he could get at Charlie White's, on credit, as he faced, for a moment, the opposite prospect of a suit. White would n't want his

books, nor the small sum on account, if he knew the truth : he didn't need to glance at the hard lines under the smile he was wearing at the moment, to understand this quite clearly. What he would do would be to sue him, now that he was within reach again ; and bring down the whole howling pack of his creditors on him. It would be an infernal row, and he should be spattered with a lot of mud. Why not postpone the question until he could look into the mine quietly, and take himself out of Piñon ? Then, they were welcome to bay at his heels, if they liked : it might amuse them and would n't hurt him. But to bring it on himself while he was here. . . . The horror of the temptation came over him again, and to shut out the vision of the man that it sought to make him, he plunged into, " Don't rely on the mine, White, if you know what's good for yourself."

" Why not ? " asked White sharply. " You have n't assigned your interest in it, have you ? "

Philip saw what was in his mind ; he was imagining that he might have assigned his interest to avoid his creditors. He might better risk the truth than that ; if that idea got abroad to-night he might as well drop everything in the

morning and give himself up to his creditors. But he knew that the moment when he was likely to risk the truth was past, and in despair he said—

“No. I have n’t assigned it.”

It occurred to him that he should have to send his gift to Dorothy anonymously.

CHAPTER X.

BEATRICE in these days was busy with her boy, who had begun at the age of four to develop a profane habit of speech which Vertner by turns laughed at and promised to punish him for. He never did punish him, for he said the child could n't help it; he was bound to hear it all about him from boys of his own age, in this rambunctious country; it was part of the country's routine of getting its growth; Edward the Second would forget all that if he was given time. When Beatrice, in doubt of time's chastisement would punish the child with a grieving heart, herself, Vertner would bring him consolatory candy, or promise him a ride on mamma's pony, next time she came back from a ride; and this sort of promise he always carried out. He was very fond of Edward the Second as he called him, though Edward was sometimes very "bad," in the

phraseology of his mother — especially when she was about to set forth on her rides. The desertion pained his young spirit, and though he was to be left with his nurse, he would occasionally lie on the floor and kick, howling out that he “hoped the pony would buck her off.” This pleased Vertner, too; he would snatch him from the floor, kicking, and having set him on his shoulder would inquire vainly through the noise and dampness if he “wizshum papa’s boy?” He would stay half an hour after Beatrice had gone to hold a romp with “son bun, Ned,” as he called him on these occasions, in a contempt of English which seemed to soothe the boy; he would stay in the face of schemes ripening to their fall, and to the loss of plain opportunities of rustle. Beatrice said he spoiled her son.

“Spoil him?” retorted Vertner. “I don’t know about that; but I’m spoiling his future. There won’t be anything left of his estate if I keep on this way. He lost me a couple of hundred dollars yesterday! Too late. Man could n’t wait. I don’t know what we can tell him when he asks what we’ve done with his patrimonial acres. He would n’t believe me, I suppose, if I said I’d had to cut off the entail.”

“Well, if you *will* stay at home with him, Ned, I wish you’d keep him out of the irrigating ditch!” exclaimed his wife irrelevantly. “That cold mountain water will give the child his death, some day.”

“Oh no!” said Vertner cheerfully. “Not unless he bathes in it! You have n’t lived in the West as long as I have, Trix, or you’d know that paddling around in an irrigating ditch can’t hurt a Western born child. Some hygienic star watches over the nativity of a young voter who adds himself to the population of Colorado from the start. It’s when the child comes West as a tenderfoot at eighteen months, or so, that he dies of croup after his first stolen wade under the cool shadows of the cotton-woods.”

Vertner won the last word by the usual unfairness of making her laugh. The idea of an umbrageous shade cast by the sickly and spindling trees, which, in this dry climate, were kept alive only by the ceaseless flow of the irrigating ditch about their roots, was irresistible. But his wife followed her own ideas of the training of Edward in a soberness which had nothing to do with her toleration of her husband’s fooling.

Ernfield had been very ill after Margaret's departure, and none of them had looked to see him again; but he was out now, once more, and, when patients did not press, would sometimes join them in their rides. Dorothy was silently kind to him; and Beatrice and he talked together as they always talked. Ernfield had not been able to bring himself to renew his old habit of calling on Beatrice—the habit established before Margaret came—but he went to a poker party which Vertner gave, that Beatrice might understand he was not staying away for any reason but the one she must guess. He was sure she knew about his feeling for Margaret, though he was equally sure that no one else knew through her. He lost all his original purchase of chips at the poker party, and bought a second supply of Vertner, who was banking and, by a quiet system of play of his own, winning the better part of the small stakes for which they were playing. Poker parties were the fashion in Måverick this year: they often took place on Saturday nights; it was entirely good form for the ladies to play, it being only understood, (the casuistry was their own,) that their winnings belonged to the plate at church the next morning.

Kiteva Snell did not approve of poker parties ; but perceiving that the fashion was setting against her in this, she let Cutter teach her one night—he would sometimes amuse himself with the ghost of a flirtation to assure himself how wholly he still belonged to Elsa ; his only rule being never to flirt with a girl he respected—and a few days later she gave a poker party herself. Every one went everywhere in Maverick. There was a rigid theory of caste, of course, but it existed chiefly in the confidences exchanged between the ladies who held themselves to be not as other ladies. There was, in fact, as everywhere in the West, too little amusement of any sort to permit one to allow one's self the luxury of rejection, or differentiation.

When Mrs. B. Frank Butler sent out invitations to a "pink tea," however, some of the ladies debated as to whether the line might not perhaps exist somewhere between the railway track and Mrs. Butler. This lady, who was the wife of one of the railway conductors, lived across the bridge spanning the mountain river flowing between the track and the town—much worse, beyond the track itself ; and was reputed to have married her submissive but clever husband three years earlier in Indiana, because she

thought she saw the making of a division superintendent, or general passenger agent, under his freight conductor's jacket. As a matter of fact, her own ambition and resolution had urged him so far on the way to one of these offices as the position of passenger conductor may be—she having insisted that he could find such a place in the West until he had left his position on the Indiana road out of sheer weariness of her insistence. He often said that he did not see what he had gained, as he had forfeited a place worth \$60 a month for a place worth \$90, and had at the same time doubled, by his movement West, the cost of living. Mrs. Butler's answer to this was the purchase of a sealskin sacque (short, and possibly not quite new, but indubitably seal) with which to sustain the dignity of her new position as the wife of a passenger conductor.

“You never know who may see you,” she said (it was not clear whether she had the president of the road in her mind, or the receiver, who was just then the more important functionary), “and I'm sure the impression a man's wife makes is often half the battle.”

It was out of this feeling, of which she made no secret, that she gave her pink tea; and the two or three ladies

who had doubted came at last, to humour it, as they said. Philip was away upon one of his searches for his father, but Dorothy, as the daughter of Mrs. Butler's clergyman, was there, and Beatrice, in her capacity of social representative of Vertner's universal good humour, was there also. The men came in after the tea, and were allowed oysters.

CHAPTER XI

I PLEASE myself by thinking of Dorothy just at this time as the centre of all the young sentiment gathered about her. In the East, where we know that things are not what they were, a young girl is no longer likely to be called upon to choose among three lovers, a privilege which ought probably to be the inalienable right of every nice girl on both sides of the Continental Divide. But the eager army of adventurous spirits who populate the West, crossing the Mississippi at an age at which a nice girl seems much the nicest thing there is, are apt to find her the rarest product of the country; and to hold her in proportionate esteem. That one man should alone be in the secret of her niceness would, under Western conditions, be a painful extravagance; and though the instinct of the West is not for economy, it is never, in this regard, other than frugal. By a fortunate provision of Nature

the pretty contest between the members of a group of young ranchmen, or mining engineers, or the galliard lieutenants stationed at a frontier fort, cannot go on for ever, else the nicest girl might finally lack niceness enough to go around. She usually mobilizes her straggling lines of amiability, and throws them upon a single knight, after a time, and if they hardily resolve to undertake the Western experiment together she commonly finds, during the first year or two, that she needs all her niceness to keep the experiment going. Sometimes she returns to the East, and marries, in the end, some humdrum New Yorker or Bostonian. In cases like this she leaves a reproachful sentiment of regard behind her, which half a dozen agreeable young fellows may share without enmity until the next young girl comes from the East to divide their good-will ; and she often takes with her a romantic regret : she sees how the West,—or, at least, these young Westerners—need her, or some one not too unlike her ; she pities their unfriended, unfeminized lot ; she thinks how, if she were braver, she should have courage to share it with them ; and after her humdrum marriage she has moments of despising the weak-heartedness which withheld her from sharing it with them. Fifth Avenue is a long way from the Rocky Moun-

tains: through the mist of distance in miles and in years she finds it easy to imagine herself suffering in the West for love of one Jack or Harry—if she had only loved him enough—and she keeps a perfumed corner of her memory for the real romance that clings about the whole great, rude, unspoiled country beyond the Mississippi: the romance which seized her young girl's fancy, even more than the battalion of young men, and which makes the unceasing and inexhaustible interest of the West.

Dorothy's heart and her conscience were sadly occupied, as, with Jack by her side, she went her parish-visiting way some days following the encounter of the brothers at the "Snow Find." She had heard nothing of this as yet. Her trouble was an ill-starred instance of the imperfection of the frank and abundant Western love-making. Dick, whom she liked so much, Dick who had been so generous and tireless a friend to her, in ways unknown to any friendliness but the very kindest, Dick who had come to her rescue in one of the most difficult hours of her life, and had ever since been beyond all saying good to her and to her father—Dick wanted to marry her! The fact, when it was fully explained to her, almost caused

her to revolt from the whole institution of marriage. *Why* should Dick want to marry her? Why could he not remain her dear, her very excellent, her never-to-be-enough praised or liked friend? Why must the tiresome question of love perpetually rise to haunt the fine and cheering and noble friendship which might bind men to women, if men were different?

She saw this to be childish, or even pettish, but it was a deep feeling in her. If it was wrong, she felt that she was wrong—deeply, painfully wrong. If every social motion between young men and young women must be conceived as charged with meaning—as trembling toward love, or away from it—the whole affair of a young girl's relation to a young man became intolerable—a game of hide-and-seek, or puss-in-a-corner, unworthy of rational beings. If she must measure her glances, or qualify her hand-clasps, or weary herself with the question of relative cordiality to this man or that, it would be a happiness to be delivered from the whole problem of marriage, or no-marriage. All Dorothy's free, gay, generous nature recoiled from this conception of her relation to anybody whatever. The heartiness, the instinct of good comradeship which differen-

tiated her from other women, affected her with a contempt for this hair-splitting code, which forbade, and made a shameful thing of the major part of the natural, candid, human instincts of her heart toward men. She could not help grieving for Dick—poor Dick!—but she would not allow herself to be sorry for the pleasant days which had led to this. It had been very pleasant to her—his friendship; and if it was at an end (at least on the old, kindly, unconscious ground), it was not her fault, but her great misfortune. She could not see, as girls often see remorsefully, in such cases, with no better reason, how she had been to blame. Was she to have imagined, then, that Dick was in love with her? She said to herself indignantly that no such discreditable and vexatious thought about Dick could ever have entered her head. But as the full meaning of Dick's passion for her made its way into her consciousness, her heart bled for him, in perceiving how just this frame of mind, on her part, must lend poignancy to his regret. That she found him impossible and incredible as a lover, was not a thing to console his lonely sorrow at Laughing Valley City. It was to Laughing Valley that he had returned the day before with a gentle air of asking forgive-

ness for having spoiled their relation, which went to her heart.

“Ah, well!” she said to herself, as she caught sight of Vertner coming toward her down a side street. “He will find some good girl after a while who will see how splendid he is, as I do, and will love him besides. The worst is, we never can be friends again!”

Vertner, as he joined her at the corner, asked if he might walk along with her; and then inquired where she was going. Dorothy said she was going on a round of duty calls, but that she was glad to see him: she wanted to ask him about his plan for enlisting her father in the publication of a Church paper. She spoke anxiously, and Vertner had his unfailing cheerfulness ready for her.

“Oh, that’s all right,” he said. “It’s a wonderful field. It’s curious some clever chap has n’t worked it before.” He was distributing his happy, indomitable little smile, as they walked, to every one they met. Dorothy, who had come to know a great many people in Maverick herself, by this time, was surprised and amused by the extent of his bowing acquaintance. She said he seemed very neighbourly; and Vertner laughed. Oh, yes, he owned, a man

had to know everybody. There was no telling what business he would be wanting to go into, one of these beautiful Colorado days; and perhaps from a willingness to avoid plumbing the depths of his Church paper scheme with her, he called upon her to admire the unwearying and systematic goodness of the Colorado weather, and insisted upon the admission that there was no place in the world for a man to settle in like Maverick. "I used to think Leadville was about right," he said, with a smile which admitted her into his professional insincerity, "but that was when I owned more corner lots in Leadville than I do now."

"No, but about the paper—" began Dorothy, again.

And, as if it had slipped his mind, "Oh, yes, about the paper!" he exclaimed; and changed the subject.

Dorothy had intended to make her first call on Miss Kiteva Snell; but, perceiving that Vertner hoped that she would be obliged to leave him before they had definitely arrived at the subject of the paper, she changed her course, determining to begin with Mrs. Felton, who lived much further out, not far from the river road.

"Why, you see it's this way," said Vertner, when he found that he must make a virtue of necessity. "There's

no diocesan paper ; and your father and I thought it would be a good thing to start one." Dorothy laughed boldly at Vertner's use of the word "diocesan" ; if she had not been much concerned about her father's share in the paper, she would have taken time to be amused by the idea of Vertner as the publisher of a Church journal—a function which he presently explained that he was to assume, if her father decided to go into the enterprise, and would accept the post of editor.

It appeared that this was to be a weekly—"a little weekly for a cent," Vertner called it ; it was really to be very small, but was to be sold at rather less than a cent, in quantities, to the various congregations of the diocese. "We'll take in New Mexico and Wyoming after a while ; but we thought of beginning with Colorado," said Vertner, modestly. "In these missionary dioceses, you know,"—Dorothy could not help admiring the glibness with which he used his second-hand knowledge procured, she felt sure, from her father,— "they have n't got around to the little diocesan papers that are so common in the East. But all dioceses need them. They are popular with the Bishops because it gives them a channel for direct communication with all the people of

their dioceses—appointments, pastoral letters, and all that, you know ; they are popular with the priests ” (Dorothy wished not to be irreverent, but she was forced to smile at Vertner’s confident use of her father’s high-church word), “ because we print a special edition for each church, with local announcements, and the people like them because they get them for nothing.”

“ For nothing ? ” inquired Dorothy, not understanding how her father was to profit by such an arrangement.

“ Well, the same thing. They feel as if they got them for nothing. Of course each church will subscribe as a body, but the papers will be distributed every Sunday in the pews, free. Every church will subscribe. We sha’n’t stick them very much for the paper by the hundred.”

“ But how do you expect to make your fortune, Mr. Vertner, by that plan—and papa’s ? I suppose you intend to make your fortune ? ” she asked, with twinkling eyes.

Vertner smote his hands together with delight. He was wearing a pair of sealskin gloves, and the concussion made a resounding noise. “ Yes, yes ! ” he cried, generously enjoying his foible with her. “ Of course ! What are we here for ? ”

"For your health, Mr. Vertner?" suggested Dorothy roguishly, under her breath.

Vertner smiled with her. "I'm afraid it would n't do to trust you with our scheme for making a go of this thing," he said, looking at her with admiration. "You might understand it."

"Thanks."

"It's a good scheme," he said, fondly. "Do you think I could trust you?"

"To misunderstand it?"

"No—not to go and give it away to the big advertisers." They laughed together at this, and Vertner said he thought he could rely on her friendliness to her father to keep her from indiscreet revelations, and explained how they -he always implicated her father, Dorothy observed, with interest - -were only going to charge for advertising in proportion to the circulation, and were only going to charge a cent a line per thousand of circulation, at that.

"But that is worse and worse," cried Dorothy. "I don't see but you are sure to lose money. You are taking every precaution."

"Um," meditated Vertner, with a cheerful smile. "Strikes

you that way, does it? Well, it does most every one, to tell the truth. I've mentioned the idea to half-a-dozen men in Denver who do a good deal of advertising, and that's what they said. They asked me if I could n't corner enough annual ruin in mines without monkeying with Church newspapers, at a cent a line, and prove your circulation by monthly affidavits? I had to do a little fright at that, of course, as if that view of the case had n't occurred to me. Your intuition, Miss Maurice," he said, making her a flattering bow, "taken in connection with their business judgment, makes me feel happy about the scheme. So you think your father and I would drop our molasses jug if we went into the *Church Kalendar* on that basis?"

"No, Mr. Vertner," returned Dorothy, with an unperturbed face, which Vertner resisted an inclination to applaud, "if you say there is a fortune in it, I shall get myself a new pair of gloves to-day. I'm sure you always know when you are going to make a fortune."

"Ah, that makes two persons who believe in me!" exclaimed Vertner. "The other is a man in Denver who dropped to my scheme. He fell off a ten-story building on

it. It was glorious. I chummed with him for an hour like a brother, and swore him to secrecy."

"Oh, please chum with me like a sister, Mr. Vertner!"

"Shall I? Well, the man said it was too pretty a scheme to give away. I believe you'll have the same feeling," he said with a reverence which he failed in burlesquing. "You see—"

He hesitated.

"Well?"

"Well, we don't make any guarantees about the circulation. It may be small or it may be—large." He paused for the effect.

"But—" began Dorothy, not finding herself more illuminated.

"Well! We make them take out a yearly contract in consideration of the lowness of the price."

"But still I don't see," cried Dorothy.

"Don't you? How many subscribers do you think we shall have at the end of six months?"

"I don't know," returned Dorothy, laughing. "Five thousand?"

"What! Five cents a line! Do you want to starve us?"

The circulation at the end of the first half year will be a quarter of a million. How many churches do you suppose there are in Colorado, Wyoming, New Mexico, Arizona, Montana, Dakota, Washington, Oregon, California and Nevada?" He rolled off the portentous list with enjoyment. Dorothy again replied that she did not know. "Well, neither do I," owned Vertner frankly; "but there must be a quarter of a million regular attendants at those churches at a low calculation. Now do you see?"

Dorothy laughed aloud. "And are you going to make every one of those people subscribe to the *Church Kalendar*?" she asked.

"I'm going to *give* it to them!" replied Vertner. And at Dorothy's look of bewilderment,—“On a *bonâ-fide* subscription plan, of course. We'll arrange that with the rectors. But you see the point, perhaps?"

"With the advertisers?" faltered Dorothy.

Vertner nodded, happily. "But will they—will they like it?" asked Dorothy.

"Well, I don't believe they will renew their contracts for the second year," admitted Vertner sententiously.

Dorothy did not instantly see her way through the sinu-

osities of this ingenious plan ; but she thought she was sure that there was a lurking wrong to somebody involved in it. She reserved this for her father, however. She meant to ask him all about it, and to beg him, whatever the honesty, and whatever the promise of the enterprise, not to share in it. She doubted all projects for making money, *primâ facie*. She had not merely a woman's conservatism about finance ; she had the timidity of all who live on a stated income ; and to this she added a rooted distrust of her father's financial capacity. It was the only distrust she allowed herself regarding him ; and even this was affectionate : how should such a man be skilled in the ways of trade ?

She formed a project of asking Jasper to advise him not to engage in the plan. She knew that her father respected Jasper's judgment ; and perhaps he would suffer himself to be persuaded by him on the business side, when her own remonstrances would not avail. Jasper and her father had been even more intimate since the renewal of their acquaintance in Maverick than she remembered them in the old days ; Jasper had once come and sat out the evening with her father in his study, smoking a pipe, only looking in on her to say "Good night." Possibly Jasper would

go into it with him ; that would make it safe, for she was sure that any business project of which Jasper approved and to which he gave his mind must prosper. But she was in a moment not sure that she wished this. She would not say to herself all that this thought implied to her own consciousness. She shrank from putting it before herself, as she had begun to shrink lately from her previsions of the final outcome of her present singular relation to Jasper. She had said to herself that she must bring the matter to an end, but she had not yet found the hardihood for that, and meanwhile she felt herself being surrounded, she had the sense of being softened and drawn to him by a slow, certain process, like the fatal eating of the sea into a rock. Jasper's will was in itself a reason for anything that he strongly wished : through all the strength of her own will, she felt this. Sometimes she felt it insupportably, and it was at such times that she said to herself that she must end it. Alas ! it is really only the man who can put an end to such a situation. A woman can only make her way out of it by a violence, an unwomanliness. From all that could be held unwomanly Dorothy shrunk with much more reluctance than from

anything that the situation into which Jasper had contrived to bring her with himself could have to offer ; and she helplessly let the affair lapse and drift.

Thinking of Jasper led her to speak of him ; and Vertner's extraordinary interest in the subject was causing her a vague wonder, when they met Dr. Ernfield, driving back to Maverick from a professional visit which he had been paying at Loredano. He drew up to the sidewalk and they paused to speak to him. Dorothy thought, sadly, that he was looking very weak and ill again. Dorothy had last seen him at Beatrice's card party, where he was looking much stronger than now ; and she was grieved by his appearance of illness. She begged him to come and see her ; she said she was in shockingly good health, but she would come down with any new and unstudied disease that he liked, if he would not come without that. But she hoped he would.

Ernfield said he should be glad to come without excuse, if she would let him. He had often seen Dorothy at Mrs. Vertner's while Margaret was in Maverick ; and twice since Margaret had gone, he had been to the Maurices' cottage : once to see Maurice himself, when he had been suffering from a bad cold, and once again to call on them, with no

business reason. Dorothy's cordial freedom, her sweetness, and the candid openness with which she lavished herself on him when he came, were not things which any one could fail to like, and certainly were not things which a man in his position could be other than grateful for. When he had last seen her he had scorned himself for the stealthy pain which ventured to show its head at the thought that it was only to a man out of the running that a woman could venture to be as good as that ; and he was willing to go again to punish himself for the thought, by enjoying her kindness as whole heartedly as it was offered. Surely, in so far as any one could imply by words said, and left unsaid, that he was a robust marcher in the ranks with the rest, with a brave, rich life before him, she implied it, with her woman's tact. It was himself he must accuse ; and he did it handsomely, as Dorothy, with the yearning painted on her face, in spite of herself, to do something for him, to somehow give him a lift, to cheer and comfort him, begged him to come and see her.

Vertner asked the news at Loredano. How was the strike Pope had made in the "Nugget" coming on ? And had Metuchen driven his bunch of cattle over into Bayles

Park for the winter? It was part of the kindliness and inbred courtesy, which oddly mingled themselves with other qualities in Vertner, that he forebore to follow Dorothy's suggestion with one of his hearty invitations to Look in on a fellow, once in a while, won't you? He did not care anything about Pope's mine, or Metuchen's cattle; but he felt the obligation to bridge the gap. Ernfield did not want to be asked to that house of painful reminders, *he* knew; and he didn't even want to be reminded that anybody was taking care not to remind him.

Ernfield, after a word of inquiry about Dorothy's church work, which had always seemed to interest him, drove on, turning back to say that he had met Mrs. Vertner coming out of Mrs. McDermott's house, on the river road: they would meet her if they went on. Fred Kelfner, who occupied his usual seat beside the doctor, lifted his hat to Dorothy as Ernfield whipped up his horse.

They were out of the town now, and walking toward the mountains against the brisk wind which often blows at these altitudes. Ouray was behind them, but on their right the long serrated rib of the Sangre de Christo range cut the fiery welter of the western sky. The range hung a

curtain before the setting sun, which went on shining behind it. Over the white flanks of the sweep of hills walling the other side of the valley there began presently to spread a tender, subtle, infinitely delicate glow, like a maiden's blush, which is and is not.

Vertner talked gaily on, in the wind ; but the still peace and beauty in which the hills lay about her, and a flying rack of thoughts within her mind, kept Dorothy quiet. She began to wish that she had not set out to make a round of visits : she had come out to escape, if she could, from her miserable thoughts about Dick, but she had not lost them, and this new trouble about her father, about Jasper, seemed to connect itself with the other, and to agglutinate the whole into that single mass of vexation which will sometimes cloud over a day or an hour for the lightest-hearted.

She would have turned back, but she bethought herself of Mrs. Felton, for whom she had set out, and who, she knew, was battling with a misery of her own, which her visit might lighten momentarily, perhaps. She did not say to herself that to solace Mrs. Felton's homesickness might be a roundabout way of helping herself to climb a little out of her own depths ; though she knew, well enough, that the

only real happiness lay, and must always lie, in some one else's happiness.

Mrs. Felton had lately come to Maverick from Philadelphia as a bride —having married a capital young fellow, originally from the same city. He had founded a prosperous Real Estate and Insurance business in Maverick within the year, and had lately been encouraged by his success to return to the East long enough to marry the faithful and charming girl who had waited four years for him. She was just passing through the first homesick time in which young wives, fresh from certain traditions of the East, sit in puzzled and miserable helplessness before the conditions of Western life. Mrs. Felton felt that the desolation, the strangeness, the hideousness of her first month in Maverick—the month which she had looked forward to as the happiest of her life—had left a permanent mark on her. She wondered whether they would see it in her eyes at home when she went back. But she was determined that they never should. They had told her that it would be something like this,—not guessing, in their ignorance, a thousandth part of the fact, but prophesying in the cheerful manner of kinsfolk, before one's marriage. They should never know how she had realized their prophecies.

She planned to confide the truth to Jessie Kidder, who was betrothed to a young man who had just left Harvard, and had gone to Dakota to start a horse ranch ; she planned to warn her under the seal of confidence. It was wrong to let a young girl venture upon such a future blindly. Jessie would be dazed and troubled by what she should say to her ; but she heard her answering that she did n't care ; that she was not marrying to live in this place or that, but for love of her husband, who would be sufficient for her anywhere. And then Mollie Felton saw how she must tell her that that, too, was a mistake : that what she said was true enough, in a way, and more than true enough. She herself had never been so happy. No. But then, she had never been so unhappy. She perceived that it would be useless ; but if she ever got home again—she no longer really believed that they should ever be free to retrace all those dreary miles of rail—she should tell her. It was a duty.

Mrs. Felton was of course not very well seen in Maverick. She was thought too Eastern ; too exclusive. She had an honest hatred of gossip, and, in other ways, had not proved as “ adaptable ” as some of the ladies could desire. It was reported that she had once said that she did not think her-

self better than her butcher ; but different. And opinions like this separated her from such society as there was in Maverick, and had helped to make her first month difficult. Dorothy understood her trouble exactly : when she had first come to the West she had passed through a time not very unlike Mrs. Felton's, herself. Even in the midst of her week or two of homesickness, however, she had been able to see it, partly, as the joke it was ; and when she was better of it, the humour of the whole Western situation had soon so penetrated her that she remembered her first feeling about the West, now, only as a sentiment which she could call up, at need, to assist her sympathy for another in like case. She did not pretend to delight in the West, now, as Kiteva Snell did ; but she was busy, she was absorbed in making the West bearable to her father (who hated it), she was up to her eyes in the business of tempering the situation to him, in the enterprise of making him happy, and for herself she had ceased to care very definitely. One was happy anywhere where one had an absorbing occupation ; and it was this wisdom that she was presently preaching to Mrs. Felton, when she had left Vertner with Beatrice, whom they met near Mrs. Felton's house.

Mrs. Felton had often accompanied them on their rides lately, and Dorothy pretended that it was to invite her to join Beatrice and Ernfield and herself in a ride on the morrow that she had called.

Mrs. Felton was not like the pretty little Jewess, upon whom Dorothy called next, unhappy because she "did so miss the *matinées*." Mrs. Felton's homesickness, if passionate, was not fantastic. Dorothy did not ask Mrs. Stern (who for an occult reason, of the sort that no one thought of questioning in Maverick, chose to go to Maurice's church) why she did not complain of the indigestibility of the clay in Lone Creek Valley; but a number of impossible questions were on her lips.

At Kiteva Snell's the atmosphere was amusingly different. The Snells, of whom Kiteva was most in evidence, socially, were very happy about themselves and the West. Miss Kitty, in particular, would hear nothing against any State West of the Mississippi, and she kept alive a fine enthusiasm about Maverick and its future which had the fire and the taking largeness of a sentiment of patriotism. She had not seen New York, and did not care to; but she knew and loved the Omaha of her birth, though she could seldom be

persuaded to go so far East, when her father would go on his pass. She was glad to remember that even her name was Western, for she had been christened Kiteva in honour of a summer resort for the people of Chicago, which her father had been engaged in booming, at the time of her birth. It was a regrettable fact that the books she wanted to read were, for the most part, published in New York or Boston, and she could only balance this misfortune by ordering them through the local newsdealer (there was not a bookseller in Maverick), in order that "the money," as the Western phrase is, "might not go out of the town." It happened also that the centre of her present intellectual life had its physical habitation on the shores of a New York lake ; but she tried not to remember that the advantages of the "Chautauqua Literary Association" were derived from Jamestown.

Kiteva had acquired her fondness for reading at a Toledo boarding school, where one could acquire a glossy coat of Culture in three years, with diligence. Kiteva had used the diligence, and when Dorothy first knew her, she was in the earlier maturity of that habit of exactitude and impeccability, which are the very things for general conversation. Her *a*

in "squalor" was quite, quite long, and she pronounced her "Asia" between her teeth, with the alluring sibilant effect : *Acia*. She accented her "le-gis-lative" on the second syllable, and could pronounce a great many words just as they are in the Dictionary, without smiling. Nothing, though, was so nice in her conversation as her elegant habit of bridling the shambling looseness of our common speech in colloquial phrases, like "could n't you," which she prettily replaced with "could not you," and the sloven "a-tall," to which she restored its printed aspect—so that "at all," with a proper fence between, lived again. Her favourite books of reference were *The Orthapist*, *A Thousand Words often Mispronounced*, and *The Verbalist*. Her *vade mecum*, however, was *Don't*, and it is fair to say that Miss Snell did n't.

Kiteva did not talk of the things of the mind, as she called them, with Dorothy ; she talked of Jasper—a little persistently, Dorothy thought. She had heard that he had returned, and had seen him ride by from her window, but had not yet met him face to face since his return. How was he looking ? Had he enjoyed his visit to New York ? He seemed very fond of the ranch, and of his work there.

He had done wonders with it. She quoted sayings of Jasper ; she rehearsed incidents of the time before Dorothy came to Maverick. She gave the impression of having known Jasper very well. Dorothy wondered if this was the kind of young lady with whom he occupied his leisure when she was not near.

She left Kiteva a little abruptly at last ; and took her way back to her own end of the town with a vague feeling of weariness tightening about her heart. Too many things had happened to-day ; there was too much to think of. Her head went round in a whirl.

She entered her own home with Jack, at last, on the verge of tears. The day and the world seemed to have gone hopelessly wrong. Her father, who had learned to interpret the signs of suppressed emotion in her, patted her hand quietly as, with her hat and jacket still on, she took her accustomed seat in his study, on the arm of his big leather chair.

"Well, little girl, what is it ?" he asked, laying down the volume of Guy de Maupassant he had been reading.

"Oh, I don't know, father ! I don't know. I wish you would n't go into this paper of Mr. Vertner's," she said abruptly.

“ But my dear young woman—— ! ” He smiled vaguely at her.

“ He told me all about it this afternoon. I don’t believe,” she told him, stroking his beard, as she bent over him, “ that you know as much about the *Church Kalendar* as I do, papa. Ask Mr. Vertner about his advertising ; and his—his ‘ scheme,’ as he calls it. It is n’t nice. It is just like you, papa, not to have looked into the details of it, at all ; and to have accepted the idea because Mr. Vertner says it is a good one.”

“ Pshaw ! pshaw ! There’s nothing wrong with the idea, child. What do you know of papers, Dorothy ? ” He got up and went over to the upright piano which filled a corner of the study.

This room, in which Maurice wrote his sermons, and played on his piano, was the largest in the house, and occupied the whole front of the second story. Dorothy never interrupted him here in the mornings, when the superstition was that he was hammering out his sermons ; but she often spent the evenings with him in its smoke-laden atmosphere. Sermon writing, with Maurice, required the consumption of a number of Havanna cigars, and was accompanied by a

good deal of Sullivan and Offenbach on the piano. Dorothy would hear him playing and singing snatches of comic opera in the mornings for half an hour; then the piano would suddenly go silent; and, from below, she would hear him pacing the floor. Then this sound, too, would cease, and she would know that he was at work, until the piano burst out again. In the moments of silence he was as often reading as writing; but this would have counted as work, too, with Dorothy, if she had known it. She had a little pride of her own in his learning. Maurice's smattering of a number of subjects was far from that, but he was by nature a bookish man; he read the poets, whom he was fond of quoting in his sermons; he had once relinquished the thought of a book on the Old Dramatists; he had a pretty taste for Barrow, whose sturdiness and solidity attracted him by the law of the attraction of opposites, perhaps; he rambled through him from time to time, pencilling his winged adjectives; and regularly, once a year, he read Thackeray from start to finish. His contemporary reading was, for the most part, French; of the older writers he liked Dumas, whose *Trois Mousquetaires* he read at all seasons; he was a subscriber to the *Revue des Deux Mondes* and the *Saturday*

Review; and he loathed the present school of American fiction; he said it lacked—but we know what it lacks.

“Come and sing ‘The Bailiff’s Daughter,’” he said, as he took his seat on the piano stool.

Dorothy, who had taken up her knitting, shook her head. She seated herself in the chair he had left, and, lost to his sight in its depths, she stared into the fire through the tears of overwrought emotion which stole out upon her eyelids, and coursed silently down her cheeks. Her father, after a dreamy prelude, had rattled into the “Entrance March” from the *Mikado*.

“Did Vertner say how he was getting along?” he asked, pausing in the middle of the march.

“No,” Dorothy managed to reply in a muffled voice.

“I should like to get out the first number in January,” he said meditatively. He whistled a bar or two of another air from the same opera thoughtfully over to himself; and turned to the piano to finish it.

“Papa!” she said, loud enough to be heard above the music. He rose and came over to her.

“What! crying?” he exclaimed. “But this won’t do at all.” He drew up a chair beside her, and took her hand.

“Why, girlie, there’s nothing in this. Nothing!” He regarded her tenderly, as he stroked her hand. He let her sacrifice herself to him from habit, he postponed her to many things ; but he loved her. One saw it in his glance even when it rested on her casually ; no one could have seen him at the moment without feeling sure of it. “I won’t enter into it at all if you take it so hard. But you’ve been accepting some of Vertner’s joking literally. You must allow for his way of looking at things. Why, I don’t believe he would care for this paper idea at all if he did n’t see a joke in it.”

“Yes, papa,” rejoined Dorothy, starting up in her chair, “that’s it. It’s a joke—a practical joke ; but it isn’t—it isn’t quite what you would call a fair one, I think, papa, if you understood it. Do look into it before you give your word to Mr. Vertner to be his editor.”

“Of course I will, little girl ! Vertner must n’t be allowed to compromise me. Perhaps I’ve let him have it too much his own way. But he knows about the business side of it ; and, after my experience with the Church School of Music, I’m willing to let some one else take all that responsibility. You can understand that, Dorothy.”

"Oh, father, I'll be so glad if you will ! And let some one else find the money, too !"

Maurice pensively stroked his long, golden moustache, with its young-mannish upward turn at the ends, without speaking. "I suppose you see the necessity of my making more money, my dear. The last monthly bills look bad. Maverick seems to be dearer than Laughing Valley. This editorship is more like a necessity than a choice. It is n't time to be too nice," he said, with the doubtful accent of waiting her opinion on this.

This man, who could satisfy his own conscience about one and another matter of daily dealing with his fellow-men, and forget it lightly ; who could shuffle and balance before doubtful questions, and choose the easy issue with a sigh for the man he might have been if things had turned out differently with him, was afraid before his daughter's moral judgments. Their certainty, their bare, blind justice were more than he could bear at times. He avoided all such questions with her when he could ; but he had committed himself to this paper with Vertner ; and, since he must go on with it, and she had learned of his connection with the plan, he would go on with her support rather than without

it. They lived too much alone, he was too dependent upon her for sympathy, to make it pleasant for him to carry on constantly, by her side, a work which she disapproved of. He was sensitive ; he always reckoned with that. If he had not been it would have been easy to use his authority, as he sometimes did in cases like that of the money he procured from time to time to meet their bills. No one knew better than Maurice how to put aside discussion of painful subjects with dignity, but no one liked less to accept what such uses of power involved.

He did not think for a moment of abandoning the scheme of the paper ; he believed that he and Vertner should make a very good thing of it together ; and it was five years since he had drunk just the wine he liked. The moral question, which had never occurred to him until Dorothy suggested it, he had dismissed without a thought. He understood Vertner's advertising plan at least as well as Dorothy ; but he saw nothing wrong in it, as he had told her.

He explained to her, now, that it was not original with Vertner ; that it had been tried in the East, where a man had made a small fortune out of it. There was no harm in it, except as there was harm in all business. She did not

hope to bring in a new sort of business transaction, which would leave the money in the same pocket, after it as before it, he hoped. They did not dispute —he and Vertner—that they were going to take money for the advertising ; but they were going to give *quid pro quo*, strictly. They did not even leave the degree of circulation given to the advertisement in doubt as was usual. The advertisers were to pay for what they got ; and for no more than they got. She heard Vertner in all these phrases, yet it was her father who spoke, and she did not know how to put her doubts together and bring them to bear on him. She found herself shaken by his confidence ; but she said, “ I see you think you understand, papa. But you don’t ; you can’t, or you would n’t have anything to do with it. These advertisers you speak of—they are not to know what Mr. Vertner means to do. They will suppose that they are giving their advertisement to a little paper which will have a circulation of a few hundred copies. When the bills come to them, if Mr. Vertner succeeds in what he hopes to do, they will be for a circulation of a great many thousands ; it will go on increasing every month ; and they will have no redress because Mr. Vertner is going to make them sign a contract for a year.”

Maurice laughed lightly. "Don't you think you may safely leave Vertner's scheme to the business men of the Great West, Dorothy? Do you think it likely that they will not understand all the bearings of a proposition that a girl like you can understand?"

Dorothy stared at him. "Oh, I suppose so," she said after a moment, daunted. "But promise to insist on Mr. Vertner making it plain to them what they are doing." She laughed herself at the futility of this. "I mean," she amended, "that the contract should imply what Mr. Vertner is about—what he hopes to do."

"They would laugh at what he hopes to do. You do yourself, Dorothy. Every one who knows Vertner understands his disposition to add ciphers to his schemes. You may be sure he has given them all the ciphers that he thinks they will credit. After all, you know, Vertner is honest. You must n't be losing yourself in any theories depending on the opposite supposition, you know, Dorothy."

"Oh, of course he's honest!" sighed she, parting with her position, in fragments, as she felt, but with a deep reluctance. She saw that it was one of those obscure cases where the ethics have a tendency to liquefy, to escape from the

instinct which is their only witness, and to melt into the medium of the business-like, the practical, the customary. She could not detain them ; perhaps she was wrong to try. Her father must know ; and “ Yes, I’m sure Mr. Vertner is good,” she found herself saying, “ in spite of his ways—perhaps because of them. There is something very charming about him. He is so sure, so gay ! And I don’t believe that he would deliberately do anything that he thought wrong,” she argued aloud with herself.

“ Certainly not ! ”

She balanced it all in her mind a moment, and then with the recurrence of her loyal trust in her father, which at the end of everything had always to be the permanent fact in her relation to him and to his doings, she said, with a brightening face, “ Oh well, if you have really looked into it, papa, and think it right, why——”

“ Yes ? ”

“ Why, of course it *is* right ! But you will look carefully after Mr. Vertner, won’t you, papa ? You will see that he makes an agreement that will be fair to everybody ? ” He gave the promise readily, though he had no intention of interfering with Vertner. She leaned over, and kissed

him. "Dear papa! And shall we be shockingly rich?"

"Appallingly!" laughed Maurice, easily, as he returned to the piano. "Come and sing that for me."

She came over to his side, adjusting the light so that it should not fall into the eyes he tired by late reading at night.

"Then you can have a horse and phaeton," she said, stroking his hair, as he spread out the music for her.

"I am not so ambitious, my dear. What I'm hoping for is an income which won't force me to look three times at a dollar. Twice, I can bear. Well, are you ready?"

He struck a chord on the piano, and she raised her voice to the first notes of the quaint old air.

CHAPTER XII

PHILIP remained a fortnight at Piñon ; and it was a week before Jasper was seen in Maverick again. Dorothy heard from Dr. Ernfield on the day following her parish visits and her meeting with Vertner that Jasper was suffering from the effects of an accident ; but Ernfield either knew no more, or thought it well to say no more, for she got no particulars from him. Vertner had heard all about the affair in the mine from Cutter ; but he had left town the day after their meeting to look after a contract for the electric lighting of Empire, a mining camp lying to the northward, and was not expected to return for some days, so that Dorothy learned nothing from him.

Jasper's first clear thought on returning to consciousness was of her. What would she think of the fight, if it should come to her ears ? Her swift, pitiless moral judgments were

as terrible to him as they were to her father. Suppose she thought him in the wrong?

But he believed she had not the material for such a thought. Philip's freak of reserve had spared her some facts that might affect her judgment; and he believed that, in any event, the initial faith in him which Dorothy retained from the habit of an earlier day, would carry him through a good deal with her. He accepted, now, in good faith, Philip's assertion of his forbearance from his obvious opportunity, and he saw that she would never hear Philip's story until he should force Philip to defend himself by telling her his own. What a frightful ass Philip was to play the chivalric at that rate, he mused. But that was his affair.

His thoughts melted dizzily into each other, as he lay half awake on the morning after the accident, trying his eyes in a blinking way every little while on the view from his bedroom window. The cowboy who had been nursing him assured him that the hill he saw was Mount Blanco, fast enough. To Jasper it was a green blur. Some sort of film seemed to be crackling and sparkling before his eyes, like a kaleidoscope, eternally breaking up and renewing itself. He saw objects as the natural eye sees the page of a

book held within an inch of the pupil. He felt vaguely for the bandage on his forehead, and then remembered again how it came there, and all that had led up to it. At recollection of the blow, the suffocating sense of hatred and rage he remembered as he fell, was fresh in his mind again. He clenched his hands under the bedclothes. When he was well again, he should not spare.

The thought that Philip might be making favour with Dorothy, or that she might have learnt what he had refused to tell her, and that the knowledge might, nay, certainly would have effected a promotion of him in her kindness, caused him to thresh restlessly about in the bed. He told Ernfield, when he came, that he must get up to-day. Ernfield smiled quietly, and asked him to try sitting up in bed. He straightened himself and sat up painfully, his eyes wild and unseeing, his carefully-kept hair in disarray. The air dissolved about him; he clutched at his fading consciousness and fell back among the pillows with a moaning curse on his lips.

It was the fourth day before Ernfield would allow him to sit about in his dressing-gown, and write a letter, and the sixth before he pronounced him well enough to try the voyage down stairs, staying himself upon the balustrade.

He made Ernfield remain to dinner with him the first day. "I say, I've been taking a simple cut pretty hard, seems to me. What's been the matter? What have I had?"

"Why, you have n't had it," said Ernfield.

"How's that? You mean I've escaped it. Well, what have I escaped?"

"Congestion of the brain."

"Humph!" exclaimed Jasper, without troubling himself to explain the connection. "That brother of mine is a brute!" He asked Ernfield if he would take another bit of venison; and Ernfield did not pursue the subject. He had his own notions of the way his patient had come by his cut.

"I say, Ernfield," Jasper went on, after a moment, "you knew something of my new mother, when she was here in Maverick. What was she like?"

"Like?"

"Yes. You know I never saw much of her. Was she the kind of woman to make my father happy, for instance?"

Ernfield busied himself with his fresh slice of venison, pursuing a bit of currant jelly with his fork. "I didn't know your father well; I could n't say," he answered. "One

ought to know more than one party to a marriage to answer a question like that."

Jasper had heard fragments of the talk which still went on in Maverick about Ernfield and Margaret, of course. He was revolving the gossip of the town in his mind, as he bent his shrewd, penetrating eyes on his companion's face.

"Yes, to be sure. But you would form some idea of her temperament. Would she be the sort of woman, for example, to support my father in—well, in what you might call the extravagances of his temperament? I suppose you know him well enough to understand what I mean."

Ernfield looked at him for what seemed a long time without speaking. "Yes," said he, at last, with intention, "I know what you mean."

"It *was* rather rough, was n't it?" agreed Jasper to the unspoken comment.

"It was cowardly," said Ernfield briefly.

"It certainly left Miss Derwenter with a nasty position on her hands. It was a test of character—abandoning her on her wedding day," he said tentatively. But Ernfield did not offer to discuss this. "She came out of it curiously—on a plan of her own," he mused. "But it's given me a kind of

respect for her ! Not every woman would have done it, you know, Ernfield."

"I know," nodded Ernfield to the canned peaches, which had been set before him.

"She answered my question for me, there : she supported him with a vengeance. But would she in a case where she was n't concerned in just that helpless way ? "

"I can't answer that," said Ernfield, after a moment. "She would do what seemed right to her."

"Yes," rejoined Jasper, "I gather that. She seems to have a conscience. But she seems fond of father, too. What I was wondering was whether in a case where he was on one side and her conscience on the other, she might n't—well, negotiate with her conscience."

Ernfield glanced at him without speaking.

"Well, I'm glad you think so," said Jasper, after a moment, in response to Ernfield's contemptuous glance. "Father needs a check." He turned the subject then ; but as he lighted Ernfield's cigarette for him, "Where did the wedding party go ? Did you hear ? " he asked, carelessly.

Ernfield perceived that he meant to imply that he might have heard from Margaret since her departure from Maverick.

But he chose not to resent this. Jasper was not worth the powder.

"No," he replied. He puffed his cigarette in silence.

The following day, seeing how Jasper chafed under his confinement, and thinking, on the whole, it might be less harmful for him to venture out than to remain within doors lashing himself into a state of morbid irritation, Ernfield consented to allow him to drive to town. Riding he forbade; and Jasper found that the jolting of his buckboard was all he cared to bear, for the present.

He had not seen Snell since the day he had called to make his preposterous announcement; but this had not surprised him. His father and brother were too wise to attempt to push the matter to a conclusion while he lay ill; but they should see that he was not seeking a prolongation of the truce. He meant they should hear from him at once.

When he had been to his lawyer, and arranged with him to secure a temporary injunction against Snell and to begin suit against his father he drove to the Maurices' cottage, smiling for the first time since his discomfiture at the "Snow Find."

He had made up his mind to a definite move which would

at least relieve him of the fear of what Philip might be accomplishing with Miss Maurice, behind his back.

She came in to him with her face alive with sympathy ; and Jasper was agreeably sure that he had not been wrong in thinking she had warmed to him with a new kindness in the week before his accident, while he added to himself that his illness and the wound on his forehead were not things to diminish her mood of good will. He lacked material for guessing that part of her mood of sympathy was due to the fact that she had just parted with Dick Messiter, who had stopped over a train to call on her father in regard to some business on his return from a visit to Denver. (She had found him much changed in the week which had passed since his return to his work at Laughing Valley City.) Much more he lacked facts to understand that her recent disposition toward him was the outcome of the talk between her and Philip which had followed his encounter with Philip in the doorway of the room in which he was now sitting. He was occupied, so far as his mind turned toward Philip's refusal, for motives of his own, to give him away, with the negative good fortune that she had no information about their quarrel. It did not occur to him to imagine that if she knew of a

quarrel between them, she must believe one of them in the wrong ; and that Philip might be suffering for his Quixotic silence.

“ You have been ill,” she said. “ You have been suffering.”

“ Oh, so, so !” returned Jasper. “ I got a rather nasty cut.”

“ Tell me how it happened. No one has been able to say—or perhaps no one would.” Jasper slipped down in the sleepy hollow chair she had forced him to take, and toasted the foot he stretched towards the fire, enjoying her interest in his illness. His pallor, she thought, became him ; and the firelight, playing on his handsome face, and twinkling whimsically upon the court-plastered wound, lent his solid, prosy good looks a remote effect of distinction and of glamour. “ Don’t let me ask if it’s a secret. But if it is n’t a secret,” she went on, with a laugh, “ you can make it as romantic as you like, for I’ve heard nothing. You can make out that you have been rescuing a lovely maiden from the Utes, if you wish. That would be as pretty as anything. Or you can have been dragged by Vixen, with your foot caught in the stirrup : that would be exciting. Or a fight with the Eveleighs about your water rights, or fences, would make a good story. I like

mining stories, too, Mr. Deed." She smiled at him from her seat at the other corner of the fire. She often chaffed him to avoid the serious talk with him which she had begun to see must one day come ; and which she feared.

"This *is* a mining story," returned Jasper, staring musingly into the fire, with a disengaged look.

"How nice ! Well ?"

"Well—I think I must n't tell it," he said, still seeming to muse. He glanced at her speculatively ; and Dorothy thought she saw that she should not be overstepping in urging him.

"No," he said, shaking his head slightly, in response to her mock humble entreaty. "It is n't altogether my story."

"How tiresome ! Could n't we buy out the other man's rights in the story ? Is he the same man who owns a part of the mine—was that it ?"

The guess was wide, and yet so near that Jasper smiled. "Something like that."

He glanced at her with intelligence, and she suddenly paled, and cried, in a kind of fright, "Surely it is n't your brother ! Surely you have n't been—been— ?" She breathed quickly, and stopped.

"Yes," owned Jasper, with the air of a man who yields to a revelation past remedy. "Yes—since you have guessed it, there is no reason why you should n't know. But don't ask me any more about it, please. I could n't tell you."

"Oh, no, no!" cried Dorothy. "Of course not. And it was he who—! Oh!" she exclaimed. Her tone expressed reproach and repulsion, and withdrawal. She shuddered away from the thought of Philip's act. "And you have been very ill! I can see it! Dr. Ernfield would not own it, but I could see that he was anxious. He was afraid of its affecting the brain."

"Yes," said Jasper lightly—"congestion and all that. But there was never any actual danger of that, I fancy. Ernfield did n't really know what had happened to me, you know—one would n't feel inclined to tell even a physician a thing like that, of course—and he thought my little scratch more serious than it was. You see I have scored on him. Here I am."

"Yes! oh, yes!" breathed Dorothy in an absorption of which she was unaware, and which was far from being as wholly related to the man beside her as he was believing with a joy which he could not have concealed if she had

been more attentive. "But you might not have escaped. A little more one way or the other, and—! Oh, how could he!"

Jasper had not expected such success. He thought of Philip's chances with her, now, almost with compassion. It was a pretty outcome of the fight that it should make for him in her favour, and lead her to so desirable a thought of Philip. In the luxury of success, he felt that he could afford to be generous—generous enough, at least, to let her see that he was.

"Oh, I don't know!" he deprecated.

"Oh, but I do!" exclaimed Dorothy quickly. All her old thoughts about the relations of the brothers returned to her; and she now caused Philip to suffer for all the excuses she had found for him.

"No, no! It was fair enough—as fair as such things can be."

"Would it have been fair if he had killed you?" she asked conclusively.

Jasper bent quickly toward her, fixing her with a passionate glance. "Would you have cared?" he asked.

All his love for her was in his eyes. She lowered her own.

"Of course," she stammered. "Why, yes! But of course!"

"Would you have cared in the way I mean?"

She controlled her eyes now and swept his pale, eager face with a furtive look.

"I don't know," she said hastily. "I—I think not."

"Oh, but Dorothy, girl, surely this time you know? I have loved you ever since! I love you even more, I think, than then. It has gone on. It has grown. You won't say that you have n't seen this—that you have n't been answering it a little bit in your heart. I can't live without your love. I've tried it a long time. I can't," he cried, "I *can't*."

It was the thrilling, irresistible note of passion. It seemed to enfold and seize her; to benumb her will; to make a reason of itself for a return. She remembered thinking, in a prevision of this scene, how his will must always make a reason for anything he strongly wished. The old fascination of his feeling for her returned upon her. Re-created, and palpitating before her as if it had never ceased to be an active part of her experience, the remembered charm went through her veins exaltingly.

For a moment she felt herself slipping, slipping.

Jasper read the half-consent in her eyes. He rose and drew near her, but at the touch of his arm she started away.

"No, no," she cried, rising in her turn. "I don't know I must have time to think! Don't press me for an answer now! Don't!"

There was a moment in which Jasper stared hungrily into her eyes, balancing in the remote second consciousness the wisdom of pressing his advantage, or of complying with the frightened longing for escape from this moment's decision which he saw in her face. Her look at once promised his bliss and confounded him.

It was at last his willingness to use the subtle rather than the direct means of arriving at any object which decided him.

"Well," said he, "let it be so, then. But you will let me have my answer soon, Dorothy?"

"Yes,—soon," she murmured breathlessly.

"You have seen that I still cared. You have let me go on. I really don't believe you could have the heart, you know, to cast me off, now. I don't ask you to say anything

to that. I only tell you to let you know that I trust you completely."

He snatched her hand to his lips and was gone. Dorothy trembled to a seat, torn and pulled by a mob of emotions — excited, intoxicated, exhausted.

How could Philip have done a thing like that ! She wondered languidly where he was.

CHAPTER XIII

ON the next day Dorothy received the following note :—

DEAR MISS MAURICE,

I am leaving town to-morrow for a week. Will you give me, to take with me, the hope of an answer on my return? I won't bother you to say good-bye.

Yours—whatever your answer, always yours,

JASPER DEED.

And to this temperate note she wrote “ In a week, then.” It was like his invariable consideration to deny himself a word of farewell. Indeed she could not help imagining in this intended absence a more intimate chivalry. It was a fine withholding of himself from so much as the colour of seeming to influence her decision.

The truth was that Jasper had found a clue to his father's

whereabouts through the Leadville lawyer to whom he had written the first day he had been allowed to sit up ; and after a visit to Leadville he was going in pursuit of him.

The impulse of another man would have been to try to make sure of his future with Dorothy before leaving Maverick ; but Jasper saw clearly that this course, to which everything, save his discretion, urged him, would only make sure of a failure which no after patience could retrieve. It was better to use a little patience now ; and to go away. But he thought it worth while to have a little talk with Maurice, whom he found at the station, as he was boarding his train.

He took the sleeping car for his destination with a cosy prophecy of success warming his heart. His reverence for Dorothy's instinctive purity and rightness of feeling, which was at the root of his love for her, consorted with his half-conscious habit of trading on these qualities in her, and he was estimating, as he stepped into the train, the construction of his departure which he could rely upon from her rectitude. He fancied her construing it almost precisely as she did ; and, as he settled himself in the smoking compartment of the sleeper with his cigar, he experienced an inexpensive

thrill of virtue at the thought of the nobility she would be imagining in him.

THE sun shone at Mineral Springs as it did at Maverick, though there was no snow at Maverick, and at Mineral Springs the snow lay hugely heaped as far as Deed and Margaret could see from the hotel portico. The snow, in fact, covered all the one-storied houses in the place to their roofs, and lay in the Pass at a depth which for over three weeks had cut off all communication with the outside world and kept them prisoners. The stage had ceased running on the day of the snowfall, being caught in the Pass, and snowed up there out of sight. It was likely to lie there until the succeeding spring. The driver and his one passenger had ridden into Mineral Springs on the backs of the horses.

Mineral Springs was usually cut off for three or four months in the year from the outside world. At its altitude, and in its situation, approachable only by a narrow defile between close-lying hills, this was expected, and as the inhabitants would have said, discounted. But the snow did not usually come so early.

Margaret had smiled with the wistful smile of happiness which had made a home for itself about her mouth since the day of her marriage, at the intelligence which Deed brought her on the morning after their arrival, that they were "snowed in"! And Deed had found an ambiguous laugh. Margaret said it was delightful. Now they could be sure of quiet. Now they should know that the disagreeable visitors to the Springs whom she had feared when he first suggested the place, would stay away. Of course it was n't the season for them, anyway. She knew that. But those half dozen stray people who sometimes came to such places, late, were worse than a mob. One could decently withhold one's self from a mob; but the half dozen, if they were in the same hotel, demanded sociability, sat at the same table, wanted to organize excursions, to get up amusements, to talk at unpropitious times, to discuss—the women were the worst—the new stitch, and the children left at home, and the altitude.

When she found that there were no visitors whatever at the hotel besides themselves, she had a moment of bewilderment; but she said she liked that, too. The hotel, which was a large frame structure of three stories, built for the summer season, when it was crowded by invalids and

tourists, was a building designed to shelter forty guests ; and even Margaret found the great dining-room a little daunting for two. She went to the wife of the landlord—a hospitable creature, largely planned like the hotel—and begged that they might be allowed to dine in modified state. The landlady was glad to close up the big dining-room, she said, and after that she gave up her usual winter sitting-room to them, and Deed often wrote or read there while Margaret sewed. The hotel was itself set on a high hill above the town, and the windows of this room commanded an extraordinary prospect of the snow-covered mountains rising on the other side of the narrow valley. They called it a valley in the town, but it was, in fact, more like a slit in the hills, which plunged precipitously down on either side, fronting each other at a distance of less than half a mile.

They had stopped at Mineral Springs for the night on the way to Burro Peak City, where Deed hoped to sell the “Lady Bountiful.” Deed had not meant to take Margaret on, but to leave her at the hotel for the necessary day or two until his return. Then, he had said, they could remain at Mineral Springs, or go on to another place to spend the remainder of their honeymoon, as she liked. Ah, yes ;

with that money once restored to the bank, with that stock placed to the credit of his trustee account again, he did not care where they went. He had proposed Mexico to Margaret in the anticipatory relief of having made all that business straight, in the relief of feeling himself again in anticipation not only an honest man by brevet.

And then the snow had come. The way to Burro Peak was blocked absolutely ; and he could not even get back to Leadville to make a struggle for his good name, or to face the consequences, if necessary. To Burro Peak not even a post had ventured since the storm. The drifting snow had buried the narrow trail along the mountain sides, which men took in midsummer with caution, to a depth where only the May sun would find it ; and the people at Burro Peak City, who had once wanted to buy the " Lady Bountiful " when Deed had refused to sell, might as well not have existed.

But it was probably too late to do any good, now, if he could reach them ; he believed Barney Graves would have made the quarterly examination of the affairs of the estate at his usual time, and he knew what must happen then. His fellow trustee lived at Red Cliff, and as Graves knew Deed

to have been chosen by Brackett to be one of his trustees as a lawyer, while he knew that he himself had only been chosen as a friend it had been his custom to leave the actual work connected with their common trust to Deed. In atonement for this seeming neglect of his dead friend's interest, it was his habit to come to Leadville quarterly to go over the accounts of the estate with Deed, note his investments, and, as a matter of form, to make a memorandum of the securities in his hands. Deed, who had rather relished the trust, on the whole, had been able to add largely to the value of the estate by judicious management of the mining properties partly making it up; and he recalled the satisfaction with which Graves had glanced over his last quarterly statement, with a miserable wonder as to his present thoughts. He made sure that Graves would have postponed the examination when he did not find him at Leadville, but his continued and unexplained absence could have had but one effect: it must long since have come to be believed in Leadville that he was dead, or that he had intentionally disappeared. In the latter case the course was obvious, notorious; the very children knew it from the newspapers. In a simpler state of society he said

to himself, scornfully, when a man disappeared his friends might imaginably organise a search for him; in his own world he knew very well that they examined his accounts.

The intolerable simplicity of the barrier which withheld him from even so much as the chance of making a fight for his reputation, goaded him at times beyond endurance. Each morning he waked to scan the sky for signs of a thaw; and each night cursed the royal setting of the sun which had shone through all the day without diminishing the snow. Sometimes in his walks with Margaret through the town, or out to the springs on the hill near their hotel, he would gather up a handful of the sparkling, fluffy, almost ethereal flakes which held him prisoner, staring at them in contempt, and flinging them away at last with a helpless shrug.

What he had done had seemed innocent to him, and at worst it was a potential wrong; the remorseless snow, and the unwilling sun were making it a crime, day by day.

Margaret saw that he was troubled, and was grieved for him, but it was because of the chagrin of which she knew—the chagrin which was cause enough, it seemed to her, for any sickness of heart. She comforted him as she could about Jasper and Philip (she had of course Deed's version of the

difference between Philip and himself), but she knew that trouble to be beyond any one's consolation. The double faithlessness and ingratitude, the sudden and absolute loss of both his sons, represented a pain to Margaret which she dared scarcely approach ; she felt that she could not understand it. It was all that she thought it ; and even in the face of the haunting fear which now lived in him, it had its way with his heart. He was sometimes almost grateful for that other trouble, which was at least superior in its immediacy and claimed a part of the thoughts which must otherwise, it seemed to him, have destroyed him. With the black misery of his real trouble—the thought of Jasper and Philip—he got along for the most part, as strong men do with the grief of death ; he said nothing and ground his teeth ; and did not suffer the less.

If it had not been for Margaret's presence and for the happiness of their new relation, he must have been utterly overthrown. She helped him not only by her love, her kindness, her unfailing watchfulness and care and sympathy, but in unconscious ways which she did not suspect. When she perceived that his sadness and abstraction persisted, she began to charge herself partly with it, in her own way—

accusing herself of not knowing what to do for him—believing that another woman would have known how to comfort him. She tried not to let him see that she was searching her conscience for grounds of offence, but Deed surprised her in it; and blamed himself. After that he joked her steadily, as of old, and maintained before her always a gaiety of demeanour which finally almost helped him to forget the gulf at the edge of which he was living, even if he could not put away from him the corroding thought of his faithless boys.

When the fatality which lurked at his side like a shadow would take form before him, in spite of all the resources by which he denied its existence, he usually saw himself in the newspapers. He saw in shuddering fancy his “case”—it would become his case at once—treated in the usual newspaper fashion, picturesquely, lamentingly, speculatively, mock-sympathetically, high-virtuously, and all the rest of it. Then the State would have its wonder at this latest stainless name in the dust, and would have its talk, in which it would recognize the entire and cheering fallibility of every one else in a world where one could n’t one’s self be as straight as one would like. His enemies would enjoy the realization

of their prophecies, while his friends.—Ah, his friends! He could not bear that thought. When it occurred to him he would fall to teasing Margaret about something. They had discovered together an infinite number of points at which she was teasing—Margaret even learning to enjoy the exploration of her seriousness with him.

She felt that she owed him this; and she encouraged him to joke the seriousness which had come so near to wrecking their happiness, as a kind of expiation. It had also the advantage of being a refuge from the chivalrous gentleness and humbleness in which he now sued silently for her forgiveness. She could not bear that he should humiliate himself before her as she had once said coldly to herself that he must; if there was any forgiving to be done, he must do it. She felt blessed in being forgiven, even if he had been at fault; she found it an odious attitude, as a wife, to be brought to book, and forced to forgive him.

For the most part they did not even impliedly discuss the question which had separated them, and gone so near to part them permanently. In the happiness of possessing each other they could not wish to go back and live that nightmare time over again, even in imagination; and it only recurred

as an actual question between them when Deed, in their happiest moments, would question his right to such bliss—to the bliss which he had once thrown away, and trampled under foot.

He made her many promises in moods like this that she should never know him again in the convulsions of passion which snatched him away from himself, and left him to do any evil—the nearest, the readiest—in the devil's mind which then replaced his own. Margaret would not let him talk of such things for long; and she would not suffer him to reproach himself since the hour at the hotel at Leadville when he had done penance before her in an abasement which would have satisfied even Beatrice.

In the long evenings they played at cribbage or bezique, or, less often, at chess. Chess was Margaret's favourite game; but seeing that Deed lacked patience for it and only pretended a pleasure in it for her sake, she would not let him suffer at it, but won him back to the lighter diversions in which his lighter spirit expanded. Sometimes they would set the cards and the board before them for cribbage, and fall to talking, and forget, until the evening was over, that

they had meant to play. Deed made her tell him, at these times, of her travels.

In the absolute confidence of their new relation it was a curious pleasure to her to tell many things which she had hidden away in her soul as things impossible to tell any one. The budget of her adventures in the roaming life she had led before she met him, and even after, seemed exhaustless, and Deed was constantly calling for more. He roared with delight at the follies she confessed, the *gaucheries* she owned up to. He said it was a new revelation of her—this history of her independence. He urged her to admit that she had lost by the exchange ; he said that she had sold herself into slavery ; he did n't see how she contented herself.

“Don't you?” she asked, letting her eyes rest on him a moment.

“No,” he said, promptly. He leaned toward her and took her hand.

“Why, James, that's just it ! Neither do I ! But you see I do content myself. I'm not planning an escape, I'm not thinking of running away.”

“Oh, that's the snow !” he said. “You could n't.”

“No ; that's true. But you'll see when it thaws. It will

be the same." She said this earnestly. Even when she let herself go, Margaret held on a little.

"Ah, you say so! That's like the bird that never shows a wish for the old freedom until you open his cage. Then,—whisk! And away he goes! Margaret," he said seriously, "don't you sometimes—just a little bit—catch yourself longing for the old, free life? You remember your hesitation about marriage—and how you came and held back, and consented and refused, and ran away and took refuge in your wretched idea of independence, and sometimes would n't so much as look out to take a peep. Occasionally I used to think you actually feared a future in which you would n't be allowed to take care of yourself."

"Yes, yes!" she said. "I know. It was so. And now I like to be taken care of!" She nestled up against him. "I *like* not to be free. I enjoy being *de*-pendent! Oh, I was foolish!" she whispered. "It seemed right—that life I was leading. It seemed good and natural. But it wasn't. *This* is right!" She looked up at him.

Their love was good to them; and not the less good because they won from it the sane and tempered bliss of a man and woman past the dithyrambic joys of first youth.

They had been parted by such a difference as might have risen between the hottest blooded pair of young lovers who ever cried off with each other over a ribbon or a photograph ; and they had come together no less eagerly and gladly, in the young lover manner, as if nothing had ever been between them. But now that they had each other, their happiness was the quiet, full-bodied content of the long-married. To have surprised the glance of serene trust that would pass between them, when their eyes met, to see the unafraid tenderness which had come to Margaret since her marriage, to see her lay her hand on his, or stoop to press a fleet kiss on his forehead, as she passed him during the day upon her errands from place to place, would have been to be taught a great kindness for the marriage state.

If he could have escaped the pain about his boys which was always by him, and could have banished the threat hanging over him, Deed might have been continuously happy. As it was he was very happy when he could forget ; and Margaret (who had nothing to forget, save her permanent trouble about his act against Jasper, of which she forbade herself to speak), was exaltedly happy.

They went upon walks within the valley over the beaten

snow, where paths had been cut, amusing themselves in the town by the sight of the entombed houses sending up a pathetic slip of chimney into the air, out of which the smoke curled steadily. They liked, too, to see the nimble householder come out of his home through the roof, using the aperture prepared for such emergencies in building mountain houses. Once they went down at night and watched from the snow, ten feet above the sidewalk, the crowd which gathered nightly at "Mulvaney's" to hazard their earnings at faro and stud-horse poker. Margaret disapproved of it, even as a spectacle, but she listened when her husband told her how, the night Philip had maddened him, he had gone to Pop Wyman's and lost a thousand dollars in an hour. He did not tell her how he had settled with Philip, of course; that might have involved the other.

The path to the springs, which gave the town its name and part of its prosperity, was one of their favourite walks. It ran along the mountain side on which the hotel itself hung; but the spot at which the water bubbled warm out of the earth, and spread itself steamingly about, commanded an even opener prospect of the hills than they got from their window; and they were fond of coming here at

sunset, to watch the great disc go palpably down behind the summit of White Face, scorching the snowy ridge with colour.

The sun had set and left the air chill, and the evening was suddenly grey as they turned one day from this spectacle, conferring pensively on their happiness, as people will who can keep their happiness at this hour. They saw the figure of a man coming toward them along the path, and began to abuse him to each other for poaching on the solitude. Then they saw it was Jasper.

CHAPTER XIV

As Philip's train felt its way cautiously down out of the mountains into Lone Creek Valley, on his return from Piñon some days after this, he was hoping that he should find Jasper well enough to see him. He meant to seek him at once on his arrival at Maverick ; and give up the "Little Cipher" to him. He had borrowed the mine from him, when he found it served his purpose, with the thought that Jasper had left it with him for a year, and could probably spare it to him for another week or two ; and to himself had added that, if he could n't, he did n't care. It was the first good the mine had ever done him, and it was certain to be the last. He took what advantage there was in the attribution of proprietorship during the ten days he remained at Piñon, reminding himself smilingly that he might considerably lengthen his tenure of

the "Little Cipher," and still leave a good balance on the credit side of his account with Jasper.

But, as he drew near Maverick, he was seized with the desire to have the thing immediately off his hands. He did not like the suggestions that were bred of this seeming ownership; and, since the bitterness of giving up his find to Jasper must come, he wished to have the business of the surrender over.

Philip's habitual choice of the comfortable issue from a difficulty sometimes led him (out of mere need for an untroubled mind) to march up to troubles which he loathed and feared, with an unintentioned effect of heroism. The idea of turning over to Jasper the mine he had discovered, staked out and worked, was galling enough to be more comfortable as an accomplished fact than he could hope to make it as a prospect.

Now, too, that he knew what the surrender meant—since he had seen for himself the possibilities of this mine which he and Cutter and Vertner had made a jest of, the splendour of the prospect would sometimes thrust itself luminously before his eyes, in empty moments when he would let his

gaze wander from the plain fact of Jasper's right to the "Little Cipher."

The ease with which he had, for the moment, reaped, without his will, the advantages of ownership at Piñon, polluted, every little while, the wholesome current of his thoughts. He put the fantasy from him, when it would recur, with the sense that he could not be well ; it was in this way that murderous aberrations and the lunacy of suicide assailed men. And yet there would return upon him that air-born phantom of a thought : That the fiction of his ownership, which had lasted a week, needed no motion on his part to make it permanent : that he had only to keep silence.

The arrangement by which he had carried on the two mines in his own name lost its old naturalness, as he found himself wishing heartily that Jasper had always known which mine was his, or, at all events, that some one person—only one—knew at this moment which was his, besides himself. He could easily have told Cutter in the Piñon days ; but he was n't protecting himself against himself in those days ; and he should n't tell him now—he could fancy even Cutter,

with all his right-mindedness, palliating the obvious facts of the situation, or diminishing his clear obligation. The person he wished to tell, now, was Jasper. He could be depended on not to diminish the obligation. He would demand an account of every penny he had expended on the "Little Cipher" since the first pick was driven into the claim; and would ask for any stray bits of silver he might have brought away in his pockets. Jasper knew his rights. That he (Philip) had staked out both claims in the beginning as his own, was nothing. That he had mentally turned over the "Little Cipher" to his brother when Jasper had written, asking him to see what a "flyer" of \$500 would do for him on Mineral Hill, was all that would interest Jasper. Bless you! he would n't care for the registry at the Land Office. If it had been the other way about there might be some sense in showing by the Land Office books, the advertisements, and all that, that only one name had appeared in all the transaction, and that, legally, the two mines belonged to but one person. But, in the present situation, Philip's mental cession of the "Little Cipher" to him plainly settled the question. Jasper could n't care to "go behind the

returns," Philip said to himself, with a curl of his lip, as the spire of St. John's in the Wilderness came in sight, and he began to get his hand-luggage together.

The sight of the church recalled Dorothy to his mind—from which, in fact, she had never been absent since the memorable day of their last interview; and he said to himself that it was because he was unhappy, not because he was unwell, that the vile thought of the simple—the fluidly simple—course open to him, dared dance about him beckoningly. If he had not wrecked himself with her, if he could think she could ever care for him, his normal state of cheerful spiritual health would come back to him; and such thoughts must find their proper place as nightmares.

"Oh, Dorothy! Dorothy!" he caught himself crying inwardly. "Can't you see that I must have you! Can't you see that I can't live without you!"

As he left the train at the Maverick station, and went into the hotel, which stood on a level with the station platform, overlooking the arriving and departing trains, he met Maurice at the door coming out.

Maurice's round, handsome face, which we know found

a smile readily when the occasion seemed worthy of it, wrinkled into a beaming smile of welcome for Philip. He offered him his large, fair, fat hand.

“Why, my dear boy!” he exclaimed in his mellifluous accents. “Just returned, are you?” with a glance at the traps Philip was carrying in his hand. “It’s good to see you again. It’s a long time since you’ve let us have a glimpse of you. Oh, I know, I know!” he exclaimed at Philip’s deprecatory beginning. “We’ve been hearing of your doings.” Maurice spoke with a benevolent smile. Philip wondered what he meant. He made a motion to walk by Maurice, whose considerable bulk blocked the narrow hotel-entrance, with the purpose of depositing his luggage with the clerk of the hotel, whom he knew. But Maurice laid a fatherly hand upon his shoulder. “Don’t do that! You are going on to the ‘Snow Find’ in the course of the afternoon, I suppose?”

“No,” returned Philip abruptly, “I’m not. I am going on to ‘The Triangle’ to see my brother.”

“Oh, indeed! He left town a few days ago to be gone a week; so that what I was about to ask you to do

holds good," he went on, without pausing to observe Philip's agitation. "You will be going on to your mine later in the day, as you can't see your brother, and you must come on to the house, and lunch with us, and take on your things from there."

"Why——" began Philip, confused and baffled by the news of Jasper's departure, and at a loss to understand Maurice's sudden warmth. This had hardly been his tone at their last meeting. Philip was about to say something which would have implied that Maurice was presuming on a relation between them which did not exist, when his companion broke in with,

"Ah! That's good! I hoped you would! Well, that's settled then. You will want to get rid of the railway grime. We will go right on to the house, if you like. I was just returning home from some parish calls at the hotel. You know Mrs. Montgomery Bolton?"

Philip said he had seen her, as he walked on by Maurice's side, dazed and irresolute. He wished to see Dorothy, of course; would he not be a fool to quarrel with his luck; would he not be twice a fool to demand of Destiny, in

Maurice's shape, the cause of this temporary amiability. He could have laughed, if he had been in a mood to laugh at anything, at the recollection of Maurice's cold and formal greeting at their last encounter. What intention toward him, what hope of service from him, was in the clergyman's mind ?

END OF VOL. II

